

## The Hunting Shack – Chapter 17

“Do you know where to get the seed?”

“I did, but the place is in North Carolina and although it may still be there, I doubt we could get there and back, now.”

We sheltered for 90 days and the adults left when the radiation level was around 75mR. The boys would have to wait until it was below 50mR which we guessed would come about 60 days later. It was colder than a Billy goat’s butt. The snow on the ground was at least 12” deep everywhere and much deeper in the shade.

This meant that the livestock would stay in the underground barn or the topside barn; they couldn’t get to the pasture. We decided to move them to the regular barn, feeling that the dim sunlight might make them feel more at ease. We moved the horses first, followed by the cattle and finally the hogs. The chickens were doing just fine where they were.

“I guess we won’t be going to town anytime soon.”

“True. With this much snow, I don’t expect to see Pat and Sally either. In an emergency, we could hook up a team to the old horse drawn wagon and get to Camdenton that way. Jonas, have you ever seen this much snow in this area?”

“Pete, I’ve never seen snow like this at the Fort.”

“Same difference, it’s not that far south of here.”

“Pete, if you want, we can go to Independence, Jefferson City and St. Louis to check on your kids.”

“What about yours, Jonas?”

“They’re in Germany so they should be ok.”

“What do they do?”

“Special Forces, both German language specialists. Last I knew, they were at Ramstein, specifically, Landstuhl Air Base.”

“Like father like son?”

“I never said anything about being in the Special Forces.”

“You never said what you actually did after ‘Nam.’”

“Suffice it to say that I got around. Alright, I was a Green Beret, for a while, but changed to a different command.”

“A step up?”

“You might say that.”

I listened to Jonas and Pete with interest. The US Special Operations Command consisted of the 75<sup>th</sup> Ranger Regiment, the Special Forces (Green Berets) and the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Forces Operational Detachment – Delta. Delta recruited from the Rangers and Special Forces. There was only one step up from the Special Forces – Delta. I’d tried out for the Rangers, but hadn’t been accepted. It didn’t matter; I was good at the job I did.

Delta was one of two counterinsurgency groups in the US military, the other being SEAL Team 6, aka DEVGRU. The first Commander of SEAL Team 6 was the famous/ infamous Richard Marcinko, the Rogue Warrior. He later went on to Red Cell and embarrassed a lot of Navy Brass. That was a real career breaker although he did put in 30 years. How do I know? Thirty years and the highest rank he held was Commander (Lt. Colonel to us). He’d be about Pete’s age.

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“Do you have any idea how much dirt we’re going to have to move?”

“Yes I do, 115 acre feet. That’s 460 acres to depth of 3”. We’ll have to dig a pit to bury the radioactive dirt. What we need is a road grader with a big blade and a front end loader to collect the dirt and put it in a dump truck. All of which was available from Camden County.”

“It will be hard with this much snow; the ground will be soaked and we’ll have to wait for it to dry off. Might be a year or two before we can start it and who knows how long it will take to grade 460 acres?”

“We’ll have to get out and about and find more hay and grain to tide us over until we can grow our own.”

“Look at the bright side, we’re alive, have more than enough food and between the underground barn and the regular barn have two years’ worth of hay and grain stored.”

“Where do you want to start?”

“With the permanent pasture, after we dig the pit to hold the radioactive soil. We’ll use soil from the pit to replace the soil we remove and seed it down to take advantage of the moisture in the soil. We can do it one field at a time. I’d like to start with the field where I planned to plant the wheat and oats. Next, we’ll do the corn field and finally the canola

field. I have alfalfa seed, but I'm not sure where that field will fit into the order, probably after the grain but before the oilfield. We have 40,000-gallons of diesel, give or take."

"If it were me, I do the alfalfa after the pasture Uncle Pete."

"Why?"

"We can feed the cattle and horses hay and reserve the remaining grain for the hogs and chickens. Besides, the alfalfa field is only 40 acres."

"That makes sense; do it your way."

Across the road was a farm owned by a corporation in St. Louis. They leased the land to farmers in the area and we decided, under the circumstances, to dig the pit there and eliminate the radioactive soil from Pete's farm entirely. As soon as the weather permitted, we borrowed the equipment we needed from Camden County, without asking. We used a grader to remove 3" of soil and we ended up depositing the soil in the abandoned quarry on the farm. Pete said we could afford to lose 3" but not much more.

Because we used large construction graders, the process went much faster than we imagined. But it had a downside, the amount of biodiesel we were burning. That led to a change in priorities, making the 160 acre canola field the third field we cleaned after the pasture and alfalfa field. The upside was the capacity of the processing equipment to produce new biodiesel. At least at 600-gallons per day, we could replace most of what we used. With the still and chemicals on hand, we could also produce anhydrous ethanol to use in the process.

To say we were busy that summer would be an understatement. By the time snow came again, all the land was ready to use and we'd had the animals in the pasture and had done two cuttings of alfalfa. We had also produced 18,000-gallons of biodiesel in a little over a month. The construction equipment was returned to Camden County with an unsigned note saying, "Thanks," attached.

The amount of fuel used was very high and it looked like we might need to transfer some from Marie and my tank to Pete's tanks. The generator was running somewhere between  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{3}{4}$  load and burning right at 4.5gph once we were out of the shelter or, roughly 108-gallons per day. The construction equipment had emptied one tank and started on a second. During our 90 day stay, we'd burned about 2.4gph, the minimum. Still, that amounted to about 5,200 gallons.

When we added up our consumption and compared it to our production, we found: used by equipment, 12,500 gallons; used by the generator during shelter stay, 5,200 gallons; and, used by the generator after we left the shelter, 13,200-gallons. The net change was 30,900 gallons used and replaced with 18,000-gallons leaving us down 12,900-gallons. We'd had to bring biodiesel from our tank and add it to Pete's tank and all the new fuel went back into his tanks.

During our shelter stay, our 12.5kw generator used 2.4-gallons per day. After, we were careful to limit our fuel usage, keeping it to about ½gph or 12-gallons per day. We'd been very fortunate that both generators had fresh oil and filters. It wouldn't have mattered with the big generator, but sure was important for ours. While we were supposed to change the oil every 250 hours, we ran the risk because it was running at minimum power. Ninety days was 2,160 hours and I was really worried it had seized up. It hadn't but the oil was way past due changing. The longest interval the manufacture's maintenance table showed was 1,500 hours to flush the coolant, replace the coolant pressure cap, replace the belts and hoses and check the fuel injector pressure. We lucked out. Big time.

The last two items were supposed to be performed by a Cummins certified technician. I guess that assumed you could find one. Did we have parts? Of course, we read the books and had enough parts for 5-6 years. The generator came with an owner's manual (the spec sheet), an installation manual and an operator's manual. The one thing omitted from the manuals was the part numbers. Cummins usually had 2-4 stores around each state and if you took in the old parts and/or the model number and serial number off the plate they could help you.

We got the last of the produce from the garden and the second cutting of hay put up before the snow came. It was worse than the previous year, 3' everywhere except for the shade where it was much deeper. Pete expected Pat and Sally to show up any day and he was disappointed. Jonas offered more than once to make the trip, but there was too much work to do on the farm to get ready for the following year.

Grass crops like pasture, alfalfa, wheat and oats have a fine root structure that both binds the soil and breaks it into loam over a period of time. Loam is the *black dirt* you see on farms with very good soil; also soil composed of sand, silt, and clay in relatively even concentration (about 40-40-20% concentration respectively), is considered ideal for gardening and agricultural uses. Loam soils generally contain more nutrients and humus (degraded organic material in the soil, which causes some soil layers to be dark brown or black) than sandy soils, have better infiltration and drainage than silty soils, and are easier to till than clay soils. Got that?

In between some of our late fall chores, Pete and I took time to check out the QDRV to make sure the long runtime on dirty oil hadn't hurt it. We changed the fluids, replaced hoses and belts, flushed the coolant and replaced the pressure cap. I'd noticed that each oil change, the oil seemed to be a bit cleaner, almost as if it was cleaning out the accumulation of crud in the engine. It was Castrol Tecton HD 15W-40, made for sooty diesel engines.

As everyone knows, engine oil accumulates carbon, metal particles and turns acidic. The oil filter removes the metal and carbon until it's blocked so that's why it's better to have a bypass filter. It stops filtering, but doesn't stop lubricating. The loss of lubrication is due to the oil wearing out. It purred when we finished so it appeared we'd have power

for the winter. Marie and I were back at the cabin because we liked our privacy too. A snowmobile got us to and from the house. How's that go? *Mama in her kerchief and me in my cap had just settled in a long winter's nap...* when we heard gunfire from the area of the house.

"Pete, are you taking fire, we thought we heard shots."

"No shit, it sounds like an army. Can you come up and lend a hand?"

"Where are they?"

"Across the road, you can get in if you're careful."

"Who is it?"

"Hang on and I'll ask them for their names, idiot."

"Give me five minutes."

"I'll give you ten and bring Marie."

"Pete says..."

"I heard, I'm getting dressed. You get dressed, find our parkas and rifles. I'll get the trauma kit."

We took our rifles, pistols, the large first aid kit and extra ammo. It took the whole ten minutes, too.

"What's the deal?"

"Near as we can tell, there's somewhere between 6 and 8 of them across the road shooting at the house and both trailers."

"What do they want?"

"They want that we should give up."

"Well hell, we nearly have them outnumbered, why would we do that?"

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We put that switch on the yard light to conserve power so they can't really see much beside the house lights. Mike and family had gone to bed and Jonas and Molly were here playing cards and sampling the good stuff.

"Jonas, ideas?"

"Yeah, let's surround them."

"Even counting the boys, that's only six of us."

"Right, but they don't know that. We'll use some Willy Pete to screen us and toss them some presents. It's your choice Pete, M61s or M67s?"

"Let's use up the old ones."

The boys didn't get frags; they got the smoke. We divided into two teams of 3 each and flanked them. Their rifles had flashhiders, but they don't really work all that well. Michael and James threw the smoke grenades and we moved in closer and then lobbed the grenades. After the sound of the explosions died down, it was deathly quiet. We wait a bit and advanced slowly. Any of the six men who had survived the frags was bleeding out fast.

"Well, I'll be damned."

"Know some of them?"

"That one there, name's Bob; Marie and I knew him and his wife Jeanie."

"Were they from around here?"

"No, they lived where we did. We ran into them in Camdenton just after the HEMP waiting for a replacement computer for their car. Haven't seen them since; until now, that is."

"Friend or not don't cut any ice with me; someone shoots us, they're off the friends list."

"More like acquaintances than friends Pete."

"Pick up any usable firearms, ammo and such and leave the bodies lay. They may be easier to handle once they're frozen. We'll load 'em up and haul them off somewhere and dump 'em in a ditch. Better yet, let's add them to the radioactive soil in the old quarry. When we cover that over, they'll be buried and nobody will want to dig there."

Cold? Hard? What do you expect when a group attacks you late at night without making proper introductions or knocking on your door begging for food? Pete said that part of the conversation that he and Jonas were having over the card game was what it would be like in a PAW. He went on to say that if this was any example, we were headed for very tough times.

There are all sorts of rules of three. There's the one I mentioned: 3 minutes without air, 3 hours without shelter, 3 days without water and 3 weeks without food. The second rule of threes says that bad things happen in threes. There's probably a third, but it doesn't come to mind. As far as the second, we had the HEMP, a ground war with China and GTW, a total of three. Did that mean we were through? The rule has multiples just like the 7/10 rule. It's three, or three times three, or three times three times three, basically a lifetime of hurt. And you never know what stage you're in until you pass one of the levels, like reaching 4, 10 or 28. If it gets to 3 times 27, you simply can't win, they'll wear you out.

With luck we'd be able to plant crops this coming year and produce more than a garden, alfalfa and biodiesel; specifically the food grains that could be used for both animal and human consumption. Figure maybe 3,500 bushels of oats and wheat plus 8,000 bushels of corn, or more. Corn was a great product and you could make flour, meal, grits plus chicken and livestock feed.

If we got a good yield on hogs, we could produce spring and fall litters of roughly 900 hogs each. We could also market 30 cattle a year unless we kept a few heifers to replace some milk cows and turned the cows into boneless, e.g. ground beef. If we got the hens to brood, we could increase our flock to the maximum size we could handle and add that to our meat sales. I'm sure than someone in Camdenton would be more than willing to set up a chicken processing facility.

Back in the day, say the early '50s, nearly every small town had a Creamery and produced milk, cream and butter for local consumption. They'd have to dust off the old equipment and resume that if this country was to get back on its feet. Don't quote me, but I think that TOM mentioned that in Greene, Iowa, population 1,200 the locker plant was across the street from the creamery. I love to ask where Greene, Iowa was, but some smart ass might say, *the same place it's always been*. IIRC, he said they produced butter in 900 pound batches.

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However, with 3' of snow on the ground, we weren't going anywhere unless it was by snowmobile. It proved to be a long winter and colder than a well digger's butt. Perhaps in a year or two when the air cleared, it would warm up and we could go back to worrying about global warming. Pete had laid in his supply of stoker coal before the war and we'd get through this year. Maybe next year, he could buy some coal from a coal fired power plant, maybe Montrose Station. We could always borrow a dump truck from Camden County and go after a few loads. It was probably less than 100 miles away.

The real beauty of those wood/coal fired furnaces is that you can also burn corncobs. In the days before using a corn head on a combine and shelling the corn in the field, you stored the ear corn and hired a professional sheller to come to your farm and shell the corn, leaving you with a big pile of corncobs.

Winter weather meant rib sticking meals. This included stews, chili, made with ground beef, onions, tomatoes and beans. Few ground the coarse ground meat that chili called for and we weren't in Texas where chili was made from coarse ground meat, onions, tomatoes, chilies and assorted spices. We'd had some when we were in El Paso. While rated as mild, it burned our mouths. The waitress just described it as real Texas chili.

We couldn't hunt with three feet of snow and didn't need to. There were deer in the 160 acres of timber and we wanted to let them recover after WW III. Personally, I preferred beef and pork over venison and sometimes even a clean kill would taste gamey. God help you if you didn't get a clean kill and had to chase it down. You could wrap it in plastic inside of freezer paper and still smell it.

Marie and I made the trip daily to the house and as often as not ended up eating with Pete and Sarah. One night he said that when the roads cleared we were going to go looking for his kids. We'd start in Jefferson City, then try St. Louis and finally try Independence. He went on to say that if they survived, they'd have been out salvaging first chance they had, he'd taught them that.

Pete and Jonas left just after Mike and I got into the fields. While we disked and dragged, they drove to Jefferson City. Sarah got a radio call from Pete on a prearranged frequency. Jonas and he had found Pat and Sally. They'd be along directly with their kids. When she asked why they hadn't come sooner, he said, "Ask them."

We had all the crops planted when the next radio call came...from St. Louis. Teresa and Matt would be there as soon as Jonas and he found them a working vehicle...another long story. We had finished the first cultivation and we looking at doing the first cutting of hay when the third radio call came from Independence. Janice and Mel would be returning with Jonas and Pete and when they got back, we'd all have a good cry...before he kicked some butt.

I put off Mike shoeing any horses until Jonas and Pete returned because I could really couldn't do the chores and farm 460 acres by myself. They pulled in two days later and a sourer look, I've never seen. Pete was seething, and it showed. Their daughter and son in law plus their two boys and daughters in law all looked very embarrassed and basically avoiding eye contact all around. Pete wouldn't talk about it so I cornered Jonas. He didn't really want to say anything out of turn but I reminded him I was family and it was legitimately my business.

The problem in Jefferson City had been simple, yet difficult. The fuel tanks on the pickup were empty and they couldn't get fuel. In St. Louis, their daughter Teresa let Matt talk her into trading in the old reliable non electronic diesel pickup for a new non elec-



tronic diesel pickup, which ended up being unavailable after they turned in their trade-in. Pete and Jonas solved that by going to the dealer and taking a comparable pickup off the lot, added a cross bed fuel tank and after-market tank, filed them and sent them on their way.

In Independence, the problem was far different. The blast had been a bit close; destroying their home but not the basement shelter. It took down the radio antenna and the pickup and trailer looked like they'd been picked up by a tornado and twisted a lot. Pete wasn't mad at Mel or Janice, it was mostly frustration. He was livid with Teresa and Matt plus Pat and Sally because what they'd done was, and I quote, *Just Plain Stupid!*

I asked and Jonas said he hadn't heard anything from Germany and he didn't even know if there still was a Germany. He was obviously soldiering on. A person doesn't get to be a CSM in a front line unit without seeing a lot of death. Since the 'Nam, America had had a change in attitude, we were willing to fight battles but KIA and WIA were dirty words. You don't do battles without KIA and WIA and a few non-combat related injuries/fatalities; that's the name of the tune. I was more than certain that before this was over, we'd have our own KIA and WIA. Maybe not, bad things only happen in threes (he said with his fingers crossed behind his back).

People had protested Iraq just as strongly as they protested the 'Nam and in Iraq, the death toll was less than 10% of the death toll in the 'Nam.

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It looked like, to Marie and me, that the fecal matter was about to hit the fan and we beat a hasty retreat back to the hunting shack right after supper. We talked it over and agreed that only time would tell. When we arrived at 5am the following morning everyone was up and Teresa and her sisters in law were helping Sarah with breakfast preparations. While we didn't know exactly what had been said or if the changes in attitude were permanent, everyone deserves a (one) break. Marie came to the barn to help Pete, Jonas, Mike and me.

The milking didn't go any faster because there were only 10 Surge buckets, but it did give us a little time to visit. Pete hadn't brought up the travails they'd experienced collecting his family and since Jonas had filled me in and I Marie, there was no need to discuss it.

After breakfast, Pete went through the process of reissuing the cowboy guns. He then marched both his children and grandchildren to the barn and selected a horse for each of them, indicating that care for their horse would be their responsibility. If needs be, there were crates the grandkids could stand on and several sets of grooming equipment.

Each of his kids checked with him, in turn, and ended up down by the timber practicing with their cowboy guns. I hadn't paid attention as I should have, after they finished

shooting and collected their brass, they returned to the house, went down to the basement and reloaded the ammo. I didn't know he had the ability to reload ammo. But, Pete had all the different powder in 8-pound cans or 1-pound cans depending upon which powder it was. He also had box after box of primers, every size of boxer primer there was. His favorite rifle powder was Hodgdon 4895, good for everything from .17 rimfire up to .458 Winchester and he had that in 8-pound cans, lots of them. He had a different powder for the handguns, Alliant, including 2400, Bullseye in 8# cans and Power Pistol in 4# cans.

He had shot shell, small and large rifle, small and large pistol and .50 caliber primers all made by CCI. Somewhere in the middle of that was an assortment of #10, #11, #11 magnum and US musket cap primers and cans of synthetic black powder, just in case.

On top of that, he had a couple of tons of used wheel weights, melted down and formed into ingots to use for molded lead bullets. He had molds for about 30 different calibers and given the brass, could mold the bullets, switch the die set and reload the ammo. He had 7 different reloading manuals. By comparison, Marie and I were rank amateurs. Teresa, Mel and Pat all had been taught the use of the reloading equipment. Still, before they started, they checked with Pete to make sure they reloaded the ammo the way Pete wanted it.

When they were on good terms, it was Mel, Pat or Terri; when they were on bad terms, it was Melvin, Patrick and Teresa. At the moment, Matt's name was mud although Pete gave Mel and Jan some slack considering what they'd experienced. The main point was that despite being only about 4½ miles from the epicenter of the detonation, they'd survived. That was slightly above 2psi.

The greatest compliment a member of our group could get was being called *Lông Trắng*, a clear reference to Marine sniper Carlos Hathcock. To this point only Pete, Jonas and I had been called that and then, only occasionally. We had the benefit of the M107s and Tac-50, probably much easier to use for sniping than the M2HB. The problem with White Feather was that it required a 3<sup>rd</sup> party to confirm a kill before it was credited and snipers either worked alone or with a spotter and no observer. I'd heard figures as high as 300 kills. And, when he earned the Silver Star, he refused to take it.

Pete said he wouldn't mind have those 4 Marine Corp Designated Marksmen from San Antonio here on the farm to bolster security. We weren't even sure we could get to San Antonio and didn't try. And, it was just as far for them to come here so we didn't expect to see them. Once Pete and Sarah's kids and grandkids could pass muster with their cowboy guns they were require to shoot their military weapons and make Sharpshooter at the minimum. (Marksman, Sharpshooter, Expert)

And, that was with iron sights. Most of the rifles were loaded model M1As with the semi-match grade sights and it would only require practice. A lot of practice. (Semi-match because they had match grade apertures but not match grade turns.) Plus, they'd been assigned a share of the chores on the farm, either helping with the livestock or working

in the garden. When a grandkid complained about working in the garden, Pete was very accommodating, putting him/her to shoveling hog manure.

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After a month of that, he/she was more than happy to help in the garden. Marie seemed tense after the incident where Bob got killed and when I asked, she explained that she expected Jeanie to show up looking for revenge. I retorted that there weren't any bodies likely to be found and Jeanie would be hard pressed to accuse us of killing Bob. Even if she did, we clearly killed him in self-defense.

I took note of the fact that Marie never went anywhere without a handgun; either her Beretta or her Colt .45. Ninety percent of the time, I wore my Miami Classic rig because it was out of the way and gave me 43 shots with the magazine in the pistol and the other two on the offside magazine pouch. Yes, I carried it in condition 1.

Around mid-summer, Pete began insisting we carry a rifle, preferably the M1As. He claimed that with the garden producing a high volume of food and the fields doing well, someone might take exception to our having food when they had none. I mounted a scabbard on the tractor and added a stock magazine pouch to my rifle. I also carried my Tac Force vest with 8 20-round magazines and 6 M67s, in the end pockets. The scope was in a separate case and could be put back on in about the time it took to insert a magazine.

We'd had passersby, but none had stopped. We decided that they were probably taking inventory. Just before it came time to harvest, 4 pickups pulling 4 travel trailers pulled in and parked. It was Joseph, Rick, Juan and Jose with their families.

"I wished more than once that you guys were here. How's it going? Did San Antonio become uninhabitable?"

"A lot changed after China and Mexico tried to invade the US. We eventually pulled out and moved up to the panhandle. We were in Dalhart when the missiles started to fly. We stayed there for over a year after. One day we were visiting and Juan said he had your location, Camdenton, Missouri. We drove up here and asked around. Everyone seemed to know Pete and we got directions. From the looks of Pete's farm, you're doing well."

"We're getting by ok, I guess. We had a time of it that first year removing the top 3" of soil to get rid of things like strontium. We've only been attacked once and they're buried in the radioactive soil. Tell your families to come to the house. Pete's wife Sarah is there with my wife Marie. All of Pete's kids are out at the shooting range; that's who is doing the shooting. Jonas and Pete are in the barn, I'll get them. Just tell Marie your names and she'll know who you are."

They got out of the vehicles and headed to the house. I got Jonas and Pete, explaining that our friends from San Antonio had just arrived. Pete's first thought was that we didn't have room. I explained that they were pulling travel trailers and his next concern was about our having enough electricity. They hadn't gotten mobile homes for the kids be-

cause he didn't have a second generator, didn't know where he could get one and wasn't sure we could produce enough biodiesel.

"Now, we really need two extra generators and will have to plant the ground across the road in canola. I guess we're going down to Springfield and looking at Cummins for generators."

"I'll get back to the guys and tell you about our trip to Springfield." The four of them went with the three of us and we left Pete's kids to protect the farm. The largest genset we could find was the Cummins DGFS rated at 230kw or 288kVA, but we did find three. They were only defined as standby generators but could put out 639 amps when set up for 120/240. We also picked up a second 12.5kw QDRV. We did very well on the filters and located several drums of 15W-40 oil to add to what we had. We took drums of any oil that was rated 10W-30 or higher. We were going to need an assortment of distribution panels and stopped by an electrical supply.

Had it just been Jonas, Pete and me, I believe we would have had trouble. With 7 of us of riding in 3 pickups and towing 3 open trailers we didn't have trouble. Then again, maybe it was the rifles sticking out the pickup windows and Jose in the bed of the 3<sup>rd</sup> pickup with the Milkor M32 Multiple Grenade Launcher. Well, he never claimed to be Dale Carnegie (How to Win Friends and Influence People). No, no trouble.

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The new generators used from 4.7 to 18.1gph. We figured we'd probably use from 8.5 to 9gph. That's just shy of 80 thousand gallons of diesel fuel for one generator running 24 hours a day, 365.25 days per year. Pete could retire his old generator and just use the single new one with the second installed as a reserve for oil changes, etc. I did the math and we'd need to plant between 700 and 720 acres of canola to produce enough canola oil to produce the 80 thousand gallons they needed and 10 thousand gallons we needed. That allowed about 5 thousand gallons for the farm equipment, vehicles and so forth. It was certain that we'd plant the entire section across the road.

Excluding the quarry and the homestead, the place across the road had around 580 tillable acres. Added to the 160 meant we could produce 740 acres of canola or about 94,000 gallons of biodiesel over a period of 157 days. We were short storage room for that many gallons of biodiesel even though we'd be using it up as we went. Pete said that there was a new tank sitting at that truck stop just waiting to be installed. It was the largest tank made for the purpose, 40,000-gallons. If we pulled one of his empty 10,000-gallon tanks and buried it at the hunting shack, we could increase his storage capacity to 70,000-gallons and Marie and mine to 20,000 gallons. The double walled tank made by Containment Solutions was the same 10' diameter as the 10,000-gallon tank. However, it was a little over 71' long compared to the 20' long 10,000-gallon tank. The truck stop had four waiting to be installed and we took them.

The new tanks wouldn't solve our problem because Pete only had a 2,000-gallon tank to store the vegetable oil, a 3 day supply. He decided to keep one 10,000-gallon tank where it was and use it for canola oil. It could be re-plumbed to the underground barn basement where the biodiesel equipment had been installed. And, he would need to use a portion of the corn crop for ethanol production. The second tank came to the Hunting Shack and the third stayed where it was to hold 10,000-gallons of biodiesel. The other 2 40,000-gallon tanks were installed across the road.

Since he'd still have space for 90,000-gallons of biodiesel and we'd have room for 20,000, we should never run out of space for fuel. If we produced too much canola, we could store it and switch to a different crop the following year, like wheat, oats or corn and plant the entire 580 acres in that one crop. Wheat should yield at least 22,000 bushels up to 46,000 bushels, not counting the main farm. It would take around 2.3 bushels of wheat to produce 100 pounds of flour. So assuming a mid-range yield of 34,000 bushels, the 580 would produce about 1.5 million pounds of flour. With the burr mill, we could produce that quantity of flour working 12/7. That Meadows mill ground 7 pounds of flour per minute or 10,080 pounds per 24 hour day or 3.6 million pounds per year working 24/7. It would probably be worn out well before then.

It was far more complicated than that. For example, how would we bag 1.5 million pounds of flour? It would take 15,000 100 pound bags. It would be better just to sell the wheat to the grain elevator and let them worry about it. We could keep enough for our flour needs and grind flour as we needed it.

How far does this, brother's keeper thing extend? If you have to ask, you wouldn't understand the answer. However, does that mean that you simply have to give away everything you grow for the greater good? Jerry D Young answered that question long ago in his PAW stories. He proposed trading the food for labor or for material things, like jars, lids, etc., which were of use to you in *Percy's Mission*.

The farm was now supporting multiple families, Pete's family of 4 couples plus children, Marie and me, Jonas and Molly, Mike and his family plus our 4 friends from San Antonio and their families. That's 11 families and almost 40 mouths to feed. A travel trailer provides temporary housing, not long term housing. Mike and Jonas now lived in single wide mobile homes. Pete said we needed 7 more so they could get his kids out from under foot and provide more permanent housing for the people from San Antonio.

The hunt for mobile homes started. We scoured Camdenton looking for unoccupied trailers and found ten. We held a meeting and decided to erect 3 at the farm and the other 7 across the road. We had installed two of the huge diesel tanks there and two on Pete's farm. Pete would have one of the Cummins DGFS generators and the location across the road would have two. Pete explained that the farm would have the 700 amps divided among the house, 5 trailers and the other farm operations. Across the road, the 639 amps would be divided among the 7 homes. Although most homes have either a 100 amp or a 200 amp service, they rarely used the full load so the fact that the generators were rated 639 amps standby wouldn't be that big of a deal. Each location would

have a large diesel capacity; 90,000-gallons on the farm not counting Marie and me and 80,000-gallons across the road. There would also be 10,000-gallons of canola oil waiting for conversion. Pete had an expeller oil press as opposed to using chemical extraction or other methods.

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The upside to having 40 mouths to feed was that: 1) we could grow the food; and 2) it gave us a maximum of 40 people manning the defenses. OTOH, it also meant additional steps needed to be taken to protect the 2 locations. A construction company proved to be our source for chain link fence with arms for holding barbed wire. The actual barbed wire came from a farm store. We used 9' poles buried 3' deep and Pete's kids and grandkids plus our friends from San Antonio were put to work installing the homes, the fence and barbed wire toppers. The generators were installed in an outbuilding along with several drums of oil and flats of filters.

Pete's existing generator backed up his new generator for oil changes and the spare 12.5kw QDRV genset backed up our generator for oil changes. As far as the shelter went, it was 1,296ft<sup>2</sup> divided by 40 or 32.4ft<sup>2</sup> per person, a tight squeeze. He could shut down the big generator and just run the DGDB with its 90kw prime output.

It took the entire summer to install the mobile homes and erect the fencing. The fence was erected across the road first and then around the rest of Pete and Sarah's homestead. Marie and I didn't get a fence, opting instead to quickly move up to the main house in case of trouble. We were very comfortable in the hunting shack and passed on an offer to occupy one of the mobile homes. We did manage to plow, disk, drag and plant the 580 acres across the road and would have a late season crop of canola to add to the 160 acres of canola we grew on Pete's farm.

We had to divide the bee hives between the farms, basically in a ratio reflecting the ratio pollen producing plants. We had 160 acres of canola, 40 acres of alfalfa and 20 acres of clover (the pasture). The other farm had 580 of canola. The hives that stayed were about 30% and those moved across the road were 70%. Canola honey is rather spicy and we mixed it with honey taken from the alfalfa and clover grown in the pasture. It had to be harvested early or it would crystallize in combs and be of little use. Pete took care of harvesting the honey and my cousin Mel helped him with the process of harvesting and extracting the honey. The beeswax was made into candles by Sarah and Terri. Crystallized honey could be restored to liquid by heating it, very carefully. The honey became one of our primary sources of sugar because there was very little refined sugar available to purchase since the HEMP attack.

We learned the hard way about the downside of installing the security fences. They seemed to represent a red flag that said we had something to protect. Not long after the harvest, we were attacked a second time by a much larger force than the first time. When I said across the road I didn't mean literally across the road, they were about 220 yards further down and we wouldn't have a direct crossfire situation.

In discussing our plans for defense, we learned that while Joseph, Rick, Juan and Jose didn't have a Milkor M32 Multiple Grenade Launcher or any M203s, they did have 2 of the 'Nam era M-79s and a small supply of HE grenades. Jonas supplemented their supply with some of his HEDP grenades and we gave them some of our supply of hand grenades. We also gave them 4 more of our M18A1 Claymores.

When you think about it, there are several ways to get through a security fence. As we saw at the border, you can cut a hole through it. Secondly, you can climb it although that is risky if someone is protecting the fence with a firearm. Thirdly, you can drive a large heavy vehicle right through it, assuming you have enough momentum and there is no ditch.

You can forget the last choice because we had good ditches except for the entrance to the homestead. Since I'm a welder by trade, Pete provided the materials for me to weld up two cattle gates with rings that were threaded by log chains. Given only a few moments notice, we could pull the gates and close and lock the gate. I had to make a duplicate gate for the other farm using the 6" schedule 80 iron pipe.

The attacking force was a bunch of gangsters from either Kansas City or St. Louis. I'd put my money on the outskirts of St. Louis. They were armed with AK-47s, hand grenades and 9mm pistols that seemed to shoot best if they were held horizontal. With something like an AK-47, it doesn't really matter if you're a good shot or not, the firearm isn't that accurate. A pistol held that way doesn't allow for good sighting. However, there is sheer power in numbers and they numbered around 80, having us by a 2:1 advantage.

We only had one M2A1 and no M240s to defend ourselves. Still, we had hand grenades, rockets out the ying-yang and more than enough hand grenades and Claymore mines. We should have gone to Leonard Wood and gotten more of those M2HBs. It was a little late now, so we made do. The things that make the American Rifleman great are a combination of his/her skills and the quality of his/her firearm.

Who won? Do you need to ask? We had the home field advantage, better firearms, highly polished skills and one thing they didn't know about, high friends in low places, ergo across the road. The battle seemed to last for hours. Seemed. We had no fatalities, 6 wounded and 2 seriously. The two with serious wounds were Matt and Pat. While Jonas and the others sorted thought the gangsters, collected weapons and so forth, Pete and I loaded Matt and Pat in the back of the pickup along with Terri and Sally in the back. Our other wounded we loaded either in the back seat of Pete's pickup or Jonas's pickup with me driving. We drove up to the Lake Regional Medical Center in Osage Beach. Matt and Pat would need surgery and the other 4 could get whatever treatment they required at the hospital.



## The Hunting Shack – Chapter 20

We stayed until they were out of surgery and Pete and I plus the 4 with lesser wounded returned to the farm.

“What did you do with the bodies?”

“We added them to the gravel pit. We picked up quite a bunch of guns and we should be able to put together a collection of about 60 rifles and 60 handguns. They didn’t take good care of their guns and some are nothing but junk. How are Matt and Pat?”

“We stayed until they were out of surgery. The doctor said their chances of a full recovery were good. We have more .50 caliber belts than we have guns to use them. How about we make another run to Fort Leonard Wood where we could get another M2 and 4 M240s?”

“Good idea. We need to replace the Claymores we used, too. Those M14s and M16s didn’t do us one bit of good. Maybe we should retire them.”

“We could pull them and return them to the Fort. Do you know how to remove them?”

“Fortunately for me, they didn’t have anti tampering devices activated. If I have a problem, I have a copy of FM 20-32.”

There were a total of 24 mines to remove, 20-M14s and 4-M16s. We had 100 cans of ammo at 100 rounds per can before the attack. It was over so quickly, we only used 4 belts. And, let’s be honest here, they were way too close to use the .50 caliber rifles. In fact, most of the shots came from our shotguns. We had the youngsters reloading the shotguns while we used our M1As or assault rifles. None of the kids were wounded unless you call getting a wood splinter a wound.

When we arrived at Fort Leonard Wood just before noon the next day, there was no guard at the gate. The place was simply locked up. A pair of bolt cutters got us in and we soon found the 5 machineguns we wanted. While we knew where the .50 caliber belts were stored, we couldn’t say the same for the 7.62 belts. It took a while, but we found them. In the process, we found M-40 gas masks, which we took, more smoke and gas grenades, which we also took, M16 magazines, 5.56x45mm ammo (M855), 7.62x51mm ammo (M118LR) and finally the 7.62 belts.

“I found some loose .50 caliber ammo, do you want that?”

“What do you mean by loose? Lying on the floor?”

“No, it was in ammo cans, 120 rounds per can. The label said, *120 cartridges, cal .50 Mk211 Mod 0.*”

“Take every last can of that stuff you can find.”

“What is it?”

“It’s what they call the good stuff, High Explosive, Incendiary, Armor Piercing. You can also call it APHEI or any combination of the letter groups; it’s all the same stuff. It’s an anti-material round that works very well in .50 caliber rifles. With those Barrett Optical Ranging System devices on the scope, you just change a setting to allow for that cartridge.”

After the growing season was over, we loaded up what we could of the wheat, oats and corn and put two steers and 4 hogs in separate trailers. We drove to Camdenton and set up shop. The livestock was taken to the locker plant where he’d get one steer for butchering the other steer and processing 4 hogs.

We were mobbed almost immediately. Someone went into a store that still used paper bags and brought them to us so we could dole out the grains. We had taken a large quantity of canned goods and required a deposit on the jars, fifty cents. We were bartering right and left when the law showed up. The Police Department had a total of 18 employees of all types before the HEMP and the war. They were down to 4 including the chief.

“What’s going on here?”

“We’re battering away the extra food we grew this year.”

“I’ll be taking that.”

“You think?”

“I know.”

“Do you have any last wishes?”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Isn’t that what they ask the condemned man before the throw the switch?”

“Are you threatening me?”

“No, chief, it’s more like a promise. Don, start packing up, we’re leaving.”

“You can’t do that.”

“Yes, we can. Are you familiar with the Fourth Amendment?”

“Yes, but these are exigent circumstances.”

“Ok, it’s mostly gone anyway. However, we won’t be back and we had a lot of food we wanted to trade to the people of Camdenton.”

“We’ll come to your farm.”

“And, we’ll bury you with everyone else that attacked the farm.”

“You’ve killed people?”

“Self-defense.”

“Say, we had a group of men go missing last winter. Do you know anything about that?”

“Nope. Just up and disappeared? No bodies?”

“No nothing, they just up and disappeared.”

“Good luck on finding them. I should tell you that to remove the radiation from our soil we graded 3” off the top and deposited it in the gravel pit on the farm across the road. Forewarned is forearmed. We dropped off 4 hogs and 2 steers at the locker plant. They get one steer for the butchering and I doubt they’ll be giving the meat away. Saddle up, we’re out of here.”

“Wait...”

“Pete, he said wait.”

“Let him stew in his own juices for a while. A lot of town residents saw that display of his and the word will spread faster than a fire in a whirlwind. He may end up getting lynched.”

Author’s note: The last lynching in Iowa occurred January 9, 1907, Victim: James Cullen, Where: Charles City, Floyd County, Crime: Murder, Ethnic origin: White, Lynched by: Mass (Mob). The last lynching in Missouri, up to now, was on January 12, 1931, Where: Marysville, Nodaway, Crime: Murder, Attempted rape, Ethnic origin: African American, Lynched by: Mass (Mob of 2,000).

The Chief of Police didn’t get lynched. I’m sure he got his ear bent pretty well. A few days later, he showed up at the farm. He was out of his jurisdiction and had a deputy sheriff riding with him. The gate was open and the cattle grate in place so he just pulled in and parked. He had a sheepish look on his face.

“Don, can I talk to Pete, please?”

“Sure thing chief, I’ll get him.”

“Pete the Chief of Police is here along with a deputy sheriff. He wants to talk to you.”

“That didn’t take long. Do you suppose he’s well done?”

“Chief, what can we do for you?”

“First off, I was wrong the other day. Exigent circumstances or not, the food is yours to distribute as you see fit. We could use a lot of food, if it is available. I organized the residents and we’ve collected every empty canning jar in town. We also collected every standard and wide mouth lid we could find. The jeweler contributed his small supply of gold and silver coins for a share. Would you be willing to do business with Camdenton?”

“Not with the town, no. We’d be happy to sell or trade with every individual in town, including you. We can supply one steer and two hogs weekly. We have a large flock producing eggs. As we cull them, we’ll have stewing hens to sell. This past summer, we planted wheat, corn and oats in addition to other crops. The wheat is hard red spring wheat and durum. The corn is an heirloom seed, not a hybrid. Actually, all of the crops we grow are non-hybrids, come to think about it. We planted 80 acres of oats and corn plus 40 acres of durum and 40 acres of hard red.”

“What about the other land?”

“We grow canola to produce canola oil which we convert to B-100 biodiesel. We also produce pure ethanol to use in the biodiesel process. We have power here provided by a 230kw standby generator with another as backup. It burns a lot of diesel when it’s running at full load.”

“Is there anything you’re short of?”

“Mostly propane and gasoline.”

“We can provide propane. I’m afraid that the gasoline is too old to use.”

“Any chance you could come up with a tanker full of old gasoline? We can restore it to refinery new. We have a few gasoline powered vehicles but haven’t had time to salvage any.”

“How much would you pay for the gasoline?”

“It’s no good, right? Half the pump price when they couldn’t pump gasoline anymore. I won’t go more because we know where to get the gasoline and just haven’t taken the time.”

“What about the propane?”

“Fill all of our tanks, install 7 1,100-gallon tanks and fill those too. On top of that, leave half of the available propane delivery trucks here, full. That will keep the town in meat and grains for a full year. We’ll deliver the food in bulk and Camdenton and a resident’s council can decide how to distribute it.”

“We don’t have a resident’s council.”

“Fine, form one. And, don’t forget those jars and lids. We have a few cases of lids but are mighty short on jars.”

“Where did you find lids by the case?”

“Canning Pantry in Hyrum, Utah. The regular lids come 60 dozen to the case while the wide mouth come 36 dozen to the case. There a limit to how much food we can pre-serve. We have 2 41.5 quart and 1 21 quart canner. The big ones do 19 quarts per batch and the small one 7 quarts per batch. A batch is 45 quarts and we can only do about 4 a day or 180 quarts. We can do more pints but given the size of our group, we mostly can quarts.”

“How big is your group?”

“We have 40 souls aboard.”

“All here?”

“No, some live on the farmstead across the road.”

“What the hell! Is that a machine gun?”

“Actually each homestead has one M2 and 2 M240s. We have a few other things that nobody needs to know about. Although the state of Missouri sees fit to ban suppressors, we have more than a few. Some of us even have switchblade knives. The bottom line is: *Don’t try to take us out, you’ll lose.*”

“Are you willing to take my word that you’ll get the propane, tanks, gasoline, jars and lids?”

“You shake my hand on it and it’s a blood oath, your blood if you don’t carry through.”

## The Hunting Shack – Chapter 21

The chief of police extended his hand. Surprisingly, so did the deputy who hadn't said a single word during the entire conversation. We had a deal and would have to hurry to get the grain loaded and hauled to Camdenton before the snow came. Pete and Jonas discussed the livestock situation and decided to haul 24 steers and 48 hogs to the locker plant. We'd provide some feed and they could butcher them as needed.

On top of that, the ladies were busy boxing up quarts, pints and jelly jars into their original cases and labeling each case. I sure hope they like green beans, it was our most prolific crop. We would also deliver 3,000-pounds of potatoes in 100-pound bags. The deputy returned later in the day with burlap bags to hold the grains and ask if we could put 100-pounds of grain in each bag. While he was there, a gasoline tanker pulled in followed by a flatbed with 10 1,100-gallon propane tanks and cradles.

We directed that the tanks to be delivered and set up at the other farm except for one, for Marie and me at the hunting shack. The next day, propane delivery trucks showed up and began filling the tanks with 1,000-gallons each. The trucks returned to town, re-filled and returned. One truck topped off all of the tanks except ours and left. The drivers of the other two trucks rode back with the driver of the 3<sup>rd</sup> truck.

Our propane tank was our first. The upside was that we could get our stove out of the machine shed, change the jets and install it at the shack. Marie refused to let me do it because she had bread making figured out on the wood burning stove and unlike a wood burning stove, the fire didn't go out on its own. Instead, she told me to get my behind in the timber and cut more wood, we were down to 5 cords.

Pete added 4 gallons of PRI-G to each of the tankers and used a pole to stir it up some. He said he needed to find another tank and pump so he could store the fuel underground. He added that if we could find one, we should get two and use one to hold water. But, to do that, we'd need some kind of industrial sized water filter. And, while we were at it, maybe we should get a third so the other farm could store water too.

"This warrants a trip to Conroe, Texas where the tanks are manufactured."

"Where is Conroe?"

"North of Houston on I-45."

"How big of tanks do you want?"

"The largest we can find, preferably a 20,000-gallon for the gas. We'll just take 3 semis and load up the biggest they have. If we can find 3 of those 40,000-gallon tanks, it would be best."

So, here we were, headed to Texas just ahead of winter. We were riding 3 per cab, armed to the teeth and even had one of the M240s, just in case. As near as we could determine from the road atlas, the trip was about 700 miles, one way. The only bad spot on the trip was the Dallas area. We had to figure a way around that city. We decided to get off at Sherman, drive to Jacksonville and swing back and pick up I-45 at Buffalo. We'd change off driving and only stop at rest areas, as needed, to use their toilet facilities. An alternate choice was highway truck stops. To maintain communications, we had 3 portable CB radios and would be using channel 38.

Containment Solutions facility was abandoned and we found 1 40,000-gallon tank and 2 20,000-gallon tanks. Pete learned that a company named Enhance It, LLC made an industrial sized UV purifier that could purify 140gpm. Argonide Corporation made water filters. The first source was in South Carolina and the second in Florida. He figured to drop off the tanks and take a second road trip to SC and FL. We would require one UV filter per tank and one filter holder for each tank. The spare parts for the UV purifiers amounted to spare bulbs and the spare parts for the filters were, of course, additional filters. The reason to filter and zap the water was that it would be stored for long periods and we needed to store only pure water.

While we'd been gone, the chief and a deputy had transferred the remaining food and livestock feed. The chief had asked if we had any .45ACP ammunition. Sarah told him we had some and he pulled out a gun case and gave it to her, with the cryptic comment, "Enjoy." The Pelican case contained 1 ea United States Submachine Gun, Caliber .45, M1A1 and 20 30-round stick magazines. Pete test fired it and it worked fine with Gold Dot so he loaded all 20 mags with 27 rounds each.

"You like that huh?"

"Yeah, I saw a soldier using one in 'Nam. Always half wanted one, but there's no way I'd put out twenty grand for a sub machinegun. You know what the FBI did with theirs when they quit using them?"

"Nope."

"Destroyed them. Even worn out they were probably worth 5 to 10 grand each. I'm still taking my regular selection of firearms, but this will give us something other than a M240 to haul."

"How come you can run your old fuel pump on single phase but you needed a new 3 phase generator for the new pump?"

"I had the pump motor in the old one replaced; the 3 phase motor is around here somewhere. We'll have to find it and put it back in. The new generator will run both pumps and more."

At least, he waited until the tanks were installed and the gasoline dumped into the new 40k tank. We would need a fuel pump in addition to the water treatment stuff, but where you find large tanks waiting to be installed, you find new pumps. A quick trip to the truck stop solved the pump problem and a trip to Springfield provided the 3 phase generator. This trip would only be Pete, Jonas and me, driving a pickup and pulling an enclosed trailer with four extra drums of biodiesel with a hand pump to transfer the fuel to the tanks as needed.

“You know where we’re going, right?”

“First stop is Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. The second stop is Stanford, Florida. I’ll take some cash and some gold, just in case. I don’t figure it’s a critical industry and really don’t expect we’ll run into anyone.”

“How far is it?”

“A shade over a 1,000 there. Then, it’s another 300 to Sanford. The return trip will be around 1,100 miles. We probably won’t need the extra biodiesel, but better safe than sorry. I think we could make the trip on what we have in the tanks. If someone put a hole in one of the tanks, it could change.”

“What makes you say that?”

“Twenty-four hundred miles in unknown territory? Are you nuts? It’s risky enough to make the trip and I wouldn’t do it if I didn’t believe it was important. Did you see how the people in Camdenton acted when they learned we had food? I think that Thompson was the way the chief made his apology. Is it my fault they weren’t prepared?”

“Sheeple?”

“They want to believe that things like this are possible, but just can’t quite bring themselves to prepare for it because of the costs, sacrifices etc.”

“Marie and I would have been up the creek without your help.”

“You’ve earned everything you have. Idle hands are the devil’s tools. Now that those two are finally out of the hospital and beginning to heal, I feel better about going after the things we need.”

We took off on another long trip to get something of questionable value. While we were gone, Marie and some of the others went into Camdenton to trade more food for some things they needed, women’s hygiene supplies. While there, who should Marie encounter, but Jeanie?

“What happened to Bob? I know for a fact that he and the others were going to that farm you live on.”



“Gee Jeanie, I don’t know; nobody knocked on the door asking for food. We do try to be accommodating. Look at all the food we provided to the town.”

“You killed him, didn’t you? Where’s his body? At least let me give him a decent burial.”

“We’ve been attacked twice. I wasn’t involved in the first attack and can’t tell you what happened. I was involved in the second, we all were. Eighty something gangsters from Kansas City or St. Louis attacked us but we held them off and killed the entire lot. We had 6 wounded that time, 2 seriously. They only came home from the hospital recently. We’ve been forced to turn the farms into fortresses.”

“Where’s Don? Maybe he can tell me more.”

“Don, Pete and Jonas are off on an errand, filling a few gaps in our protection. They’ll only be gone a few days and I’ll tell him you asked when they get back.”

“I’m not going to let go of this until I find out what happened to Bob.”

“In your position, I probably wouldn’t either. How are you supporting yourself these days?”

“I took a night job; the pay is great and I have to work 21 days a month.”

Marie told me later that she was pretty sure that Jeanie was earning her living on her back. But, back to our trek. We attempted to avoid all large cities and keep an open eye as we passed through smaller communities. We had to circumnavigate so many communities on our way to South Carolina; it added 2 days to that leg of the trip. We eventually located the company and picked up several of their industrial sized units with multiple spare bulbs. We found an operating motel and put up for the night to get a good night’s sleep in a bed. They were only taking gold and silver and the restaurant’s menu was just grand, you could have fried fish, deep fried fish or baked fish.

The next morning we left for Sanford with the 300 mile trip taking from sunup to dusk. We were just short of our goal and couldn’t find an operating motel or hotel and ended up camping. At least we weren’t stuck eating fish and corn fritters aka Hush Puppies. We were up early and completed our trip. We picked up 4 of the filter holders and nearly all of the filters that would fit the holder. Once installed, the water stored in the 20,000-gallon tanks would be pure.

The 1,100 mile trip back was fraught with challenges and one or two minor gun battles. With a load in the pickup covered with a tarp and tied down, we attracted unwanted attention. The weapons of choice both times were the Thompson and shotguns because they both had about the same range, 50 yards. As soon as we could clear a path, we took off. It took 4 days to drive from Sanford to Camdenton.

Before we'd left Sanford, we'd refilled the truck's tanks using the hand pump and a 5 gallon fuel can. Our intention was to drive straight through, changing off drivers. Because of the trouble, we changed our plans and limited the segments to about 300 miles per day. Still, when it was said and done, the trip only took 9 days. We had now been to Texas and the east coast and discovered that the attacks had been wide ranging. Most of the large Metropolitan Statistical areas had taken one or more hits. Rebuilding our country would take the better part of century given the reduced population and all but eliminated manufacturing.

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At some time during the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, selection of targets had changed. It was no longer the military attacking military targets but the military attacking civilian targets. I think it started with WW II. While the allies had been severely criticized for attacking civilian targets, they didn't start it. Adolph Hitler started it with the London Blitz and strikes on places like Coventry. He was the first to use fire bombs. The US and British struck back, initially not using incendiary bombs. The bombs of that era weren't accurate and eventually the allied turned to fire bombing, destroying major portions of cities, like Dresden and eventually Tokyo.

During WW I, the German used that huge railroad gun to attack Paris. Interestingly, the large railway guns were initially developed by the British and French. When the airplane came along their usefulness was doomed.

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"I ran into Jeanie when we went to Camdenton to shop. She accused me of killing Bob, but I played dumb. She claimed that she just wanted his body back to give him a decent burial. I asked how she was earning her living and from what she said, I concluded she's a prostitute. I sure hope I don't run into her again. How was your trip?"

"It took longer than planned just getting to South Carolina. The trip to Florida was also longer than planned, but up to that point we had no trouble. On the return leg, we were confronted twice, close up and personal. That Thompson and our shotguns worked as intended and we got away. We'll get the new equipment installed and settle in for another nuclear winter."

"How long will this go on?"

"The easy answer is until it's over. I'm sorry Marie, I really don't know. I think the TTAPS Study said something like 3-4 years. Other studies suggested over 10 years. Then you have the other side of the coin, nuclear summer. I'm not a climatologist so I don't really know. I can tell you it was fairly cool in Florida."

"How much has it shortened our growing season?"

## The Hunting Shack – Chapter 22

“Pete says the better part of a month. We’re planting 88 day corn and fast maturing crops.”

“You do realize that if we had a greenhouse, we could plant food crops year around?”

“That would be up to Pete, but I’ll mention it. Once we get a handle on the biodiesel, we should be able to increase grain crops but it won’t be by much. Our supplies of PRI-D and PRI-G are diminishing. That will probably mean one more trip, this time to Houston. We’ll probably try to get a semi load of their products in drums.”

“Do those things have a shelf life?”

“PRI say 3 years in unopened containers. I assume that’s for maximum effectiveness. Supposedly, you treat your fuel annually for best results. I really doubt we’ll have a problem because of our fuel turnover. If our stabilizers get old, we’ll probably just use more.”

I mentioned the greenhouse to Pete and his immediate response was, “Good idea, we’ll go to Springfield and get one for each farm right after we drive a box trailer to Houston for more fuel additives.”

“At least we’ll be on familiar ground.”

“Are you saying that we should have gone on down to Houston when we were in Conroe?”

“No, it didn’t occur to me at the time and had it occurred to anyone else, I’m not sure we could have found room on the two flatbeds with the smaller tanks.”

“Start a list of things we could use in case we come across them. One drum should stabilize 110,000 gallons; so if we get a dozen drums or more we should be good for years.”

“But, if we get all we can find, we might never run out. I can only think of a few things that we could use more of, coffee, coffee filters and toilet paper.”

“What if you saw something that you couldn’t live without?”

“I’d improvise, adapt and overcome.”

We had little trouble getting to Houston where we loaded 54 drums of PRI-D and 6 drums of PRI-G. We didn’t find any PRI-Flow. We started hitting grocery warehouses and loading the area above the drums with Charmin, Northern and Bunn coffee filters. We were full up and hadn’t gotten any coffee. We detoured to New Orleans to the Fol-

gers plant where we found a loaded semi. We tinkered for a while, used battery cables and got it started. We added 220 gallons of biodiesel in the saddle tanks and headed home. We had enough coffee to use it as a barter item. When we passed a Wally-World distribution center on the way back, we decided to check it out. We found an unloaded rig and got it running. We backed it up to the loading dock and went to town.

We first went for pharmaceuticals, prescription and over the counter. We added more ladies supplies, what ammo they had and things we hadn't seen for a while like rice, beans, and condiments galore. We spent most of the day packing the trailer to get as much of what we wanted packed for shipment. We were sure glad the weigh stations weren't open; we had to be several tons overweight.

We could have taken more from Wally World, but we already had 3 full semis and only three drivers. There were many products that reduced or prevented diesel from gelling and Pete suggested we try Springfield after we got home and unloaded. In particular, he wanted to check out fuel distributors who might have anti-gelling fluids on hand in case they still had summer formula fuel when it got cold.

Basically following the same route home that we'd used for the first and second trip, we avoided confrontations and made it home by driving straight though. I was ready to lie down and sleep for a week. Regrettably, that was not to be because as soon as the PRI products were unloaded, Pete and Jonas were chomping at the bit. We used the box trailer and two flatbeds and headed for Springfield. Once there, we found the Yellow Pages and went through them, looking for the fuel distributors.

We secured all the anti-gel we could find, several drums, and took the opportunity to check several nearby warehouses. This is where we stepped in it and came out smelling like Chanel No 5. One of the warehouses dealt in specialty foods. Not exotic, just high grade things like Mountain House, AlpineAire and all manner of preparedness foods. Pete only uttered one expression, "Trade goods."

We shopped around with one additional thing in mind, paper products. You can never have too much toilet paper or feminine hygiene products. If nothing else, they're trade goods. We added 6 cases of strike anywhere matches (12,000/case). The final warehouse was a bonded warehouse for tobacco products and we cleaned it out. They actually had fewer cases of tobacco products than we thought they would. We found two disassembled medium sized greenhouses and loaded them on the flatbeds.

"Are we done now? I don't know about you guys, but I could use some rest."

"It's starting to snow, so I guess we'll call it quits, Don. How's your supply of firewood?"

"Low, about four cords."

"How about we all pitch in and get your supply back up to 25 cords?"

“How much firewood do you have Pete?”

“A bit more than you have, but none to spare. If we get everyone involved, we should be able to cut, split and stack all we need in just a few days. I’ll check with Joseph and find out if they got those wood stoves he mentioned. If they did, they’ll need firewood too.”

The few days turned into a full month with nearly everyone involved. Not only had Joseph et al. found woodstoves, they found enough for all 7 mobile homes and extras for the mobile homes at Pete’s. It probably amounted to every woodstove in Missouri. It included woodstoves for Jonas and Mike’s home and the other three. Over the 30 plus day period, we harvested around 300 cords of wood and ran it like a factory operation.

People who use wood as a primary source of heat burn an average of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  cords per year. Those who use it for pleasure only use as little as  $\frac{1}{3}$  cord per year. Marie and I averaged closer to 5 cords because of the wood burning kitchen stove.

There is no particular shortage of trees in Missouri although one may be forced to harvest from places not normally used, like National Forests, etc. The problem with the large harvesting operations was the care required to only remove the deadfalls, standing dead trees and standing irregular trees. The upside was that it allowed the remaining trees to grow faster. Taking 300 cords from 160 acres of timber wasn’t heavy harvesting, we could have taken all winter and harvested around 1,300 cords. The trees weren’t going anywhere and 1,300 cords at  $128\text{ft}^3$  each is a great big pile of wood,  $166,400\text{ft}^3$  of wood. Stacked as a cube, the pile would be 55’ high, 55’ long and 55’ wide (try it,  $55^3$ ).

By the time we finished, there was 3’ of snow on the ground and we had processed over 19,000-gallons of biodiesel. To process all ~94,000-gallons of canola would take 157 days unless we ran 3 shifts. We had nearly 75,000-gallons of the oil to extract and process. Our schedules were rearranged and we had a continual operation going on the biodiesel, producing 1,800-gallons per day and extruding the oil from the seeds at the same rate it was used, allowing us to finish in 42 days.

We were required to keep our power usage to the bare minimum because we needed to underuse the fuel we were producing in order to build a reserve. We used every trick in the book including those mini fluorescent bulbs (compact fluorescent lamp) that you never turn off. There was quite the debate over leaving them on full time. If you treated them as regular bulbs, they used slightly more power for startup, less during use and didn’t last much longer than regular bulbs. Leaving them on all of the time extended their lives but you were using power 24/7. We reached a compromise, using them for certain cases, 40 watt bulbs in other cases and nothing larger than a 60 watt bulb. The bulbs were around 30% efficient with a 60 watt using 17 watts, if left on.

Had we needed to purchase everything that we’d salvaged in the PAW, we’d have needed a printing press or direct access to Fort Knox. If the cost were averaged over

our 40 residents, it might not seem excessive. Might not. This year, the snowfall wasn't as bad as the previous year; perhaps the nuclear winter was trailing off.

Most of the salvaged goods had been abandoned for whatever reason which lessened the guilt we invariably felt about taking something belonging to another. A portion of those goods were provided to Camdenton, gratis. No doubt the chief of police felt giving Pete the Thompson had been a good investment. It sure had come in handy on our trip to the east coast.

"I believe it's time that we just settle in, grow our crops and livestock and stay home for a change."

"Be still my heart. Uncle Pete, surely you've missed something we need."

"Well, we could always make a trip to Wisconsin."

"Cheese?"

"Green Bay. We will go to the Charmin factory, get 3 truckloads and be set for life."

"Are you sure they make Charmin in Green Bay?"

"Nope." (They actually manufacture Charmin, Bounty, Puffs, Bounce, and Downy in Green Bay according to the Green Bay Chamber of Commerce.)

"Well, ok, but only after the crops are in."

A half truckload of fabric softener sheets would be a lifetime supply and paper towels were a needless luxury. We could get 2½ loads of Charmin and be everyone's friends for life. OTOH, in Neenah, WI, one would find the Kimberly Clark plant that made feminine hygiene products and that would put us in good shape with the ladies, so make it 2 loads of Charmin and a mixed load of fabric softener sheets, Puffs and a load of pads/tampons.

Our actual biodiesel usage was only 50,000 gallons due to our conservation measures. At that rate, we could have all tanks full in about two years. But, as I've pointed out, we had as much storage capacity as a truck stop. We had taken work chits from those in Camdenton lacking a means to pay for the food. It had been clearly explained, *honor the chits or go hungry next year*. As soon as the crops were in, we took off, driving 4 trucks rather than 3, just in case. The first three were filled with what we discussed and the 4<sup>th</sup> hauled the pads/tampons. It was a refrigerated box trailer that could double for a box trailer. Back home, those that remained had been told to get those greenhouses erected.

One place we happened upon was a seed company which sold both hybrid and heirloom garden seeds. They wouldn't take checks, credit cards or cash and we plied them

with a few 10<sup>th</sup> ounce gold coins. Then there were the cheese companies and Pete spent some of the one ounce Eagles. We got a 5<sup>th</sup> semi-reefer turned on the refrigeration unit concluding that a little cold wouldn't hurt the seeds. The people on this trip were Pete, Jonas, Joseph, Rick, Juan, Jose and Marie who rode with me. That came about because she complained loudly that she had no idea where we were going and a woman need to go along to pick out the women's supplies.

It was easier to agree with her than fight. Before the subject came up, I had planned to just take all we could haul. Then it changed from 3 trucks to 4 and I needed a rider. She lit into me like a woman scorned and I simply folded. We ended up with a full load of feminine products, two loads of Charmin, a mixed load of fabric softener sheets and the fifth truck holding seeds, cheese and other miscellaneous items we happened upon, like those in Burlington, Wisconsin at Centaur Forge. Shoes and nails; Mike was in horse heaven.

They had steel, aluminum and synthetic shoes, assorted nails, hand tools, anvils, forges, coal and coke. The list was too long to relate here, but our herd of horses should be able to avoid going barefoot for years. Were we just bouncing around looking for things? Hardly, it would waste too much fuel. And, as it was, we were severely limiting power usage to build our fuel supply. That changed when, on the way home, we found a fuel distributor who had a whole lot of old diesel fuel.

"Well, why not? We have enough of the PRI products and anti-gelling fluid to treat all of the fuel. We could find some tankers, mix the fuel treatments into the fuel as we load them and fill all of our tanks."

"There was that 10,000-gallon tanker the construction firm who built the underground barn had."

"Yes, and there are sure to be more if we just look for them. We might even find some full of fuel. We can dump in the additives and let them slosh around on the way home and maybe mix in a little."

"How many people is this going to take? Somebody has to do the farming and someone else the gardening."

"I say six, Don. We can put the additives in the back of the pickup and we'll set out looking. Every time we find a truck, we'll treat it and send it home with a driver and someone riding shotgun. Now, if by chance, we find a third tanker, shotgun can drive the pickup and the other person the tanker."

"Who?"

"Jonas, you and me plus Mike, Joseph and Marie to drive the pickup, I trust her."

## The Hunting Shack – Chapter 23

“We could take more people, Pete, and limit the number of trips.”

“Right, but we won’t. If we find three tankers, loaded, we could have as much as 48,000-gallons of fuel, depending on the size of the tanker and whether it is a single or double. Whatever we get will double each time we go to the distributor. We have to save some space for the biodiesel too. The livestock seems to be partial to the canola cake.”

“Are you planning on increasing the herds?”

“I just might, I haven’t given it a lot of thought. As it is, we’re up to 30 sows and we have at least 30 gilts we could breed. Sixty hogs with two litters per year should give us at least 1,200 market hogs and probably more.”

A sow produces two litters per year and they generally run around 12-13 pigs. Allowing for piglets killed by the sow, etc., we would easily have 1,200-1,500 hogs per year to market and enough left over for those of us here on the farm. A cow has one calf, on average, a year, and it take 2 years to grow it to market weight, roughly 1,250 pounds. However, Pete had already started growing his milking herd from 30 to 60. The farm had around 45 yearling cattle and about the same nearing market weight.

Pete’s solution to the beef vs. milk cow problem was to raise a dual purpose cow. The typical breeds of milk cattle are Holstein, Jersey, Guernsey, Brown Swiss and short-horn. Beef cattle could include shorthorn, Angus, Beefmaster, Brown Swiss and Texas Longhorn. The best dual purpose breed was the Brown Swiss and that’s what we grew. They took longer to produce a calf and were the second largest milk producing breed. The milk had a high level of butterfat (4%) and protein (3.5%). We made our own Havar-ti jalapeño pepper cheese.

On the first trip out, we found two tankers at a truck stop, still loaded and a third that was empty. Pete and Jonas took the empty tanker to the distributor to fill it after adding the stabilizers to the empty tanks. Mike and Joseph took one full tanker while Marie drove the pickup and I followed her with the 2<sup>nd</sup> loaded tanker. The manifests said that each pair of doubles could carry 9,000-gallons per tank, giving us a net of 54,000-gallons. A second load in each set of tankers and we’d only need to return once more to have a reserve in the tankers of the same quantity. I didn’t say that well, but you get the idea.

In less than 10 days, we had all the diesel fuel we’d need. In our absence, a cupola had been built on the peak of the old barns’ roofs. It was accessible via two ladders, one up the side of the barn and a second from the side ladder to the cupola. It was to be manned 24/7 Juan said. They’d had several drive by’s and had acquired several 3<sup>rd</sup> generation night scopes together with a monocular with a magnifier, the ITT NightQuest 6015 Gen 3 Night Vision Monocular with ITT 5x Magnifier Lens F/1.5. We didn’t ask



where he got the night vision. The night vision could run up to 11 grand although LEO pricing was around 7. I wasn't familiar with the NightQuest Monocular. The cupola was being staffed by all of the teens on the farm and the one across the road.

"Now, after we finish processing the canola into biodiesel, we'll top off all of the tanks and not have to worry about electrical usage. Take a day off and we'll start cultivating."

"A whole day off? Does that exclude the livestock chores or is it the time we get off after tending the milking, feeding the stock and so forth?"

"It means I'll see you the day after tomorrow."

"I saw that."

"Saw what?"

"*The Day After Tomorrow* starring Dennis Quaid."

"Oh. Go, get out of my sight and come back when I told you."

I don't know what other people do on their day off, but in addition to some personal time that Marie and I had, I spent most of the day splitting the firewood down to kindling size for the kitchen stove. Marie spent her part of the day baking bread using home ground wheat. She also used the beans she left soaking overnight to make a large pot of chili with beans. We ate a fair amount of beans and had finally developed whatever stomach enzymes needed to prevent large amounts of methane.

We also spent time after supper cleaning all of our firearms, simply because we had the time and not because they needed it. In my view, it was comparable to motor oil; change it every 3,000 miles or every 3 months, whichever comes first.

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A few changes had been made due to the circumstances. We kept our rifles and shotguns in the saddle scabbards and the gun belts draped over the saddle horn. We, nonetheless, carried our military pistols and kept our military rifles handy. We even added extra ammo to our saddle bags, for all of our guns. Our weapons were always in condition 1 and our state of mental preparedness was yellow (per Jeff Cooper). Cooper is best known for his revolutionary work in pistol training, but he favored the rifle for serious work.

"Personal weapons are what raised mankind out of the mud, and the rifle is the queen of personal weapons."

"The rifle is a weapon. Let there be no mistake about that. It is a tool of power, and thus dependent completely upon the moral stature of its user. It is equally useful in securing

meat for the table, destroying group enemies on the battlefield, and resisting tyranny. In fact, it is the only means of resisting tyranny, since a citizenry armed with rifles simply cannot be tyrannized.”

“The rifle itself has no moral stature, since it has no will of its own. Naturally, it may be used by evil men for evil purposes, but there are more good men than evil, and while the latter cannot be persuaded to the path of righteousness by propaganda, they can certainly be corrected by good men with rifles.” - Jeff Cooper, *The Art of the Rifle*

The AWB? Yeah, they passed it in 2009; we totally ignored it. They controlled guns and magazines but forgot to control the ammo. Some states had passed that ammo serial number legislation, but ammo sales had all but disappeared in its wake. Certain companies, mostly companies like Black Hills who made military ammo didn't apply serial numbers and none of the surplus ammo had serial numbers.

A company named Ammunition to Go had British Radway Green back in early 2009 and I bought 2 cases of that in addition to the Prvi Partizan. The difference was that the Radway had 1,500-rounds per case on stripper clips in bandoleers. The ad said:

*This is Radway Green British Military surplus .308 / 7.62 NATO ammo. It has a 145gr FMJ copper jacketed bullet. This ammo was manufactured at the Radway Green Arsenal in England, for the British Department of Aerospace. This ammo is stamped with the NATO cross and L2A2 headstamp. It is brass cased, berdan primed, non-corrosive and mostly 1990s production. It comes loaded on 5rd stripper clips for use in M14 magazine guides, FAL mag chargers or Enfield 2A rifles. This ammo can be used in any weapon chambered for 7.62 NATO ammo. This is the best military surplus ammo available. It is packed in a British 750rd sealed battle pack, enclosed in a military wood crate. There are ten 75rd. bandoleers enclosed in the battlepack. This is some of the nicest ammo to come along in years!*

It cost \$1,000 per case. It made for very good military ammo, but wasn't sniping ammo. I had the Black Hills to snipe with. I mentioned it earlier but didn't dwell on it because I was saving it for a combat situation. And, of course, we had Mk211 and A-MAX.

Horse soldiers know the poem called *Fiddlers' Green*. I wasn't in the Calvary in Iraq, but I did memorize the poem.

*Halfway down the trail to Hell,  
In a shady meadow green  
Are the Souls of all dead troopers camped,  
Near a good old-time canteen.  
And this eternal resting place  
Is known as Fiddlers' Green.*

*Marching past, straight through to Hell  
The Infantry are seen.*

*Accompanied by the Engineers,  
Artillery and Marines,  
For none but the shades of Cavalrymen  
Dismount at Fiddlers' Green.*

*Though some go curving down the trail  
To seek a warmer scene.  
No trooper ever gets to Hell  
Ere he's emptied his canteen.  
And so rides back to drink again  
With friends at Fiddlers' Green.*

*And so when man and horse go down  
Beneath a saber keen,  
Or in a roaring charge of fierce melee  
You stop a bullet clean,  
And the hostiles come to get your scalp,  
Just empty your canteen,  
And put your pistol to your head  
And go to Fiddlers' Green.*

You know modern Calvary by their black Stetson hats, spurs and occasional sword. Calvary units (armor) take up collections, sort of like a pool, and buy a sword. Everyone who contributes has his/her name put in a hat and the winning name gets the sword. The spurs denote that you belong to the Order of the Spur.

Soldiers serving with Cavalry units (referred to as Troopers) are inducted into the Order of the Spur after successfully completing a *Spur Ride* or for having served during combat as a member of a Cavalry unit. Traditionally, each Trooper is presented spurs by their sponsor at a ceremonial dining in commonly referred to as the *Spur Dinner*. The spurs are to be worn with the military uniform during Squadron or Regimental ceremonies and events or as designated by the Cavalry unit commander. In some units, gold spurs are awarded for combat inductions while silver spurs represent having completed the Spur Ride. Within the tradition, silver spurs and gold spurs hold a similar relationship for the cavalry as the Expert Infantryman Badge and the Combat Infantryman Badge hold in the Infantry. There is no MOS requirement for the Order of the Spur and the order is open to members of foreign militaries serving with US Cavalry units. During the Spur Ride, candidates will be required to recite from memory the traditional cavalry poem, *Fiddler's Green*, or other traditions or historical information pertaining to the Cavalry.

What made the Radway handy was that it was on stripper clips in bandoleers. A person could easily carry two bandoleers in a saddle bag along with some Gold Dot and fill the saddlebag on the other side with ammo for his/her cowboy guns.

One thing I practiced with the M1A 20-round magazines was loading them with only 18-rounds. My pistol magazines were different, they were fully loaded, all five of them; and, the pistol was in condition 1 with the magazine topped off. To this point, we'd not been in a firefight that lasted very long. With the extra room in my military ammo side, I added additional loaded magazines, just in case. I could just see myself in a drawn out battle holding up my hand and saying, "Wait while I reload my magazines."

As with anything, it could change at any moment and for that reason, Juan had overseen the construction of the cupola. In addition to the night vision riflescopes and night vision binoculars, there was a pair of powerful binoculars, EL 10×42 WB by Swarovski Optik. The teens loved the observation job because they could sit on a lawn chair and just look around. It beat working in the garden and shoveling hog manure. Juan said he had trouble deciding between the extending telescope and the binoculars but had opted for the binoculars.

If we hadn't had the observer, I don't doubt we may have been attacked. With the observer, we made it through the summer and well past harvest season. After delivering the agreed amount of food and meat, we settled in to produce biodiesel and alcohol. Working around the clock, we finished that in less than 60 days and then topped off the diesel tanks. One trip was required to refill one of those 18,000-gallon tankers. Meanwhile, we completed fall plowing, leaving the disking and dragging until spring.

After that, we harvested only enough firewood to replace what we'd burned, around 50 cords total. During the same time, Jonas and Pete each drove a 5 yard dump truck to Montrose Station and picked up two loads of coal. We had no more than finished with the firewood than an honest to goodness genuine blizzard blew in. It was the first storm of the new winter season and, while I can't prove it, probably set records. Pete called on the radio and told us not to bother trying to get to the big house until the storm was over.

Instead of chili with beans, Marie went for beef stew and fresh baked bread. I suggested that after the stew was gone, I had a yearning for tuna and noodle casserole. The great part about stew was that it improved with age so she fixed the casserole the following night and we switched back and forth between stew and tuna. When the tuna was finished, she tried her hand at goulash, American style, with ground beef, onions, tomato sauce and elbow macaroni. Next the stew ran out and she made chili with beans and we switched between that and the goulash. One night after we began to get bored with the leftovers, she fixed breakfast for supper including fried eggs, hash browns, bacon and toast.

The snow lasted five days but it still was blowing 2 days later. I called Pete and asked if we should try to make it to the house. He said that we should wait until the blowing snow cleared and we could see the house from the shack; then, and only then, should we try to make the trip. Looking out the window showed the snow to be about 3½' deep. All of the snowmobiles were at the farm along with the ATVs and Marie and I didn't have skis or snowshoes.

## The Hunting Shack – Chapter 24

I called him back and told him that we couldn't make it if we wanted because the snow was too deep. He said they'd plow us out and to sit tight for now. So, that's what we did. Marie had a project going with her sewing machine and I dug out a good book I hadn't read in a while. We also cut back on the amount of food we were eating because we weren't active enough to justify the size of the meals we were eating.

It was two weeks before we got plowed out and when we got to the farm I loaded up a two passenger snowmobile, just in case. Sarah had a large dinner cooking and insisted we stay and eat with them, Jonas and Molly, Mike and Stephanie.

"What do you plan to do with the empty trailers?"

"Well...they're all hooked up and doing fine, right?"

"I guess so."

"I'm not planning on doing anything with them. Someone will show up who we might want to invite to live on the farm. Someone like Mike and Stephanie for example; where would we be without a farrier?"

"I have a couple of friends who might take you up on an offer like that, Pete."

"Why didn't you say something sooner Jonas?"

"They were ok where they were. This has turned into a long drawn-out affair and I tend to believe that their preps might be running low."

"Where are they?"

"Waynesville, about 40 miles from here."

"Logistics people?"

"No, they're Military Police instructors."

"Good shots?"

"The best in the outfit. All of them saved for years and bought Springfield Armory Super Match rifles and only shoot Black Hills ammo in them. They also have M1A Loaded models, either Remington 870s or Mossberg 590A1s and Para-Ordinance P-14 pistols. They each have some of those short piston conversions from Bushmaster, too. Every member of their families has a long gun, pistol and shotgun."

"Pretty hard to get there with this much snow on the ground."

“You give the word and I’ll call them on your radio. We can leave it to them to get to Camdenton and we can meet them in town. I’m convinced they went to the Fort and helped themselves; either before or after we went there and cut through the gate. They had keys, you know.”

“No Jonas, I didn’t know. Help yourself to the radio and try to reach them. Supper is almost ready and Sarah will have a hissy if we’re not at the table when she puts the food on it.”

Jonas turned the radio to a frequency we didn’t use and called. On the third try, he got a response.

“Jonas, is that you?”

“Roger. How are you doing Andy?”

“It’s been tough. Charlie and Rose aren’t much better off and Bill and Cindy are living on Meals Refused by Ethiopians.”

“Can you get to Camdenton?”

“Is that where you are?”

“No, but close by. Can you make the trip?”

“We’ll get a snow plow and force our way there if necessary.”

“Have you been to the Fort?”

“Several times. Somebody cut the lock off the gate.”

“That was us. We needed a few things.”

“Want us to bring some T-rats?”

“The E version?”

“Yeah.”

“We’ll take all you can carry.”

“Are you short on food?”

“No, but they’d be handy.”

The reference was to the B-ration. Specifically the UGR-E. The Unitized Group Ration – Express (UGR-E) is a compact, self-contained module that provides a complete, hot meal for 18 Warfighters. With the simple pull of a tab, the food is heated in just 30-45 minutes, and is served in trays to Warfighters like a cook prepared meal. The desire of field commanders is to provide a high quality group meal as soon as possible. Often, the logistics system will not provide for food service equipment and cooks to achieve this objective. Further, in some cases, providing hot food to remote units via insulated food containers is not practical. Consequently, the UGR-E provides the capability of furnishing a hot meal without the necessity of equipment, cooks, fuel, or power. Combat units that will benefit the most include small remote groups such as Special Operations Forces, Signal Corps, Military Police, Artillery, Military Transition Teams, etc. The capability afforded by the UGR-E offers an alternative to individual meals as the sole source of subsistence in austere, remote locations.

The UGR EXPRESS (UGR-E) traypack components are thermally processed, pre-prepared, shelf-stable foods, and currently packaged in hermetically sealed, half-size steam table containers. There are currently 2 breakfast and 6 lunch/dinner menus. The module comes complete with all food items and disposable items (cups, compartment trays, napkins, utensils, and trash bags) necessary to feed 18 individuals. Each menu provides an average of 1300 kilocalories (12% protein, 38% fat, and 50% carbohydrates) per serving. Standard items that are included in all modules are coffee, creamer, hot sauce, gloves, box cutter, hand cleaner (towelette), dinner trays, dining packets, trash bags, and heater module. There was also The Unitized Group Ration - Heat and Serve (UGR-H&S) which served 50 but needed basic kitchen facilities.

They varied the menus from year to year just like they did with the MREs. Some of the menus were very good, for both the MREs and the UGR-E. Others were difficult to choke down. If they could bring a truckload of those, it would improve our emergency LTS food supply. Those traypacks had a shelf life of 18 months at 80° and would last far longer if stored in the shelter, maybe as much as 36 months.

Sarah had fixed a standing rib roast and slow cooked it all day. She also had baked potatoes and a green bean casserole. We were standing behind our chairs when she put it on the table. She managed a perfect medium, cooked too much for some and semi-raw for others, but very good nevertheless. She had chocolate cake with creamed cheese frosting for desert and we enjoyed it with our coffee. We then turned to the matter of Jonas's friends.

“Military police? Did they do any time in the sandbox?”

“They did, that's why they became instructors. They used a lot of MPs in Iraq to protect the convoys. These guys got back and volunteered to be instructors so the next batch of MPs going over there would know what to expect and how to handle it.”

“From what Pete said, I assume you were over there for Desert Storm.”

“That was nothing compared to what you guys had to put up with Don. It was a different battle that started with bombing and ended with a 4 day run through the desert testing the M1A1 Abrams. That M256 gun made most of the difference.”

“Have you noticed how history tends to repeat itself?”

“What do you mean?”

“The world was engaged in an arms race at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, resulting in the First World War. The Great Depression and Adolph Hitler came next, which eventually ended the depression. Because we developed nuclear weapons, a new arms race evolved, taking a brief hiatus when the Soviet Union collapsed. It only took 15 years to resume the arms race and by that time, it included China, India, Pakistan and North Korea. Do you think Einstein was right when he said, “I do not know how the third World War will be fought, but I can tell you what they will use in the Fourth – rocks!”

“Only if we run out of ammo Don. Gasoline might be different and we’ll have to switch to pure ethanol. If you don’t mind bullets made from wheel weights, we should never run out of bullets. Plus I have more gunpowder than you saw in the basement, the 12 cans down there and another 24 in the shed. I have no idea how many primers I bought, thousands. Plus I have molds for 00 buck and slugs.”

“And, when the vehicles wear out?”

“That’s a pretty big herd of horses and we can find some mules to pull a plow. We can also trash farm to eliminate erosion and limit the amount of soil we disturb.”

“Jonas, any idea about how long your friends will take to get here?”

“How long does it take to plow 40 miles of road, 4-5 hours? They’ll have to get a 5 or 10 ton truck to run and load it with those traypacks, pin down any other ordnance they want, hook up their travel trailers and drive to Camdenton; three days tops, more likely two.”

The next morning Marie and I rode the snowmobile back to the house and I started shoveling snow so the new people could access the trailers. I also raised the temperature to 65° and stacked large piles of wood for their potbellied stoves. It’s probably not fair to call them potbellied, they were rectangular and much more efficient than the potbellied stove we had in the hunting shack. The stove would burn coal, wood, pellets and corn cobs. I finished up just in time for lunch of potato soup and homemade bread.

After lunch I checked all of the propane tanks and topped them off on both farms. I grabbed Mike and asked if he would ride shotgun so I could go to town and refill the propane delivery truck. He grabbed his Marlin and climbed in the cab. We stopped by the Police Department so we could let the Chief know we were refilling the truck.



“Now you just hold on a minute. Our supply is getting low. You ought to try Lebanon, they have both Ferrell Gas and AmeriGas plus several retailers.”

“Ok Chief, thanks.”

“What did you mean ok Chief, thanks? We made a deal with them.”

“There are more dealers both wholesale and retail in Lebanon and it’s not that far. I’ll mention it to Pete and he’ll figure out a new arrangement with the town.”

“But if we’d known, we could have driven the short distance to Lebanon and conserved our fuel.”

“Mike you’re just looking for a fight; let it go, it will even out in the end. Remind me and I have Jonas tell his friends to come to Lebanon instead of Camdenton. It’s always nice to have an ace up your sleeve. I’m beginning to believe that the more guns we have the better.”

“You already have a lot of guns.”

“I meant shooters, like these 3 MP friends of Jonas.”

“All we’d need to have our own town would be a gas station, a Casey’s General store and a liquor store.”

“There more than enough Casey’s In Lebanon and Camdenton. And that liquor Pete makes is some of the best.”

We filled up the delivery truck at Ferrell Gas and headed home. When we got there, I explained to Pete and Jonas what had happened and Jonas called his friends to change the meeting place. He caught them just in time. Another thirty minutes and they’d have been on the road. Pete was po’d and, as usual, it usually boiled down to the same cause, the chief of police in Camdenton.

This late in the game, I think we’d broken every rule in the book pertaining to living in a civilized society. However, beginning with the HEMP, the invasion and the nuclear war most of us felt it no longer mattered. The deal with the town over jars and lids was falling on hard times. There were no more lids and each year the number of available jars had dropped. Come canning season this coming year, we’d have a problem.

## The Hunting Shack – Chapter 25

Ball and Kerr canning jars are made by Jarden and Canning Pantry is part of Highland Brands. Should we go after a truckload of jars? Interesting question and it might depend on what size of truck we could find. Some kind of enclosed delivery truck might be the best choice, like a 24' U-Haul truck. My best guess was that the 40' truck would hold over two thousand cases of quarts. If they didn't have enough regular mouth quarts, we could get pints and regular or wide mouth didn't matter.

The MPs and their families arrived in Lebanon just before dark. We'd been lucky getting to Lebanon and attributed it to having cut a path with the propane truck. Each family had a pickup pulling a closed trailer and the beds of the pickups stacked high. In addition to the 3 pickups and snowplow, there was a 10-ton HEMTT M977 Cargo Truck pulling a trailer of similar size.

With it starting to get dark, we needed to get home and after Jonas had a word with the man driving the snowplow, we headed for home. Despite conditions, we were back just before sunset and they were shown the trailers. We all pitched in and moved the things from their pickups and trailers into the mobile homes. With an abundance of caution, we also moved the contents of the truck, the UGR-Es, to the shelter.

Sarah, Marie, Molly and Stephanie had been working on stock pot of chili with beans and had baked two pans of corn bread while we unloaded. It was a little cramped in the house so the kids were set up at the kitchen table and the rest of us at the dining room table. We'd had bigger crowds and it wasn't a big problem.

Andy and Mary, Charlie and Rose and Bill and Cindy really seemed like nice folks and all of the children, mostly teens, were well behaved. Not everyone liked corn bread and Stephanie sliced a loaf of home baked bread for those that didn't.

"It isn't Texas chili, but it sure is good. Thank you Sarah."

"Are you from Texas Andy?"

"Born and raised. Haven't been home much, except for when we went down to the border because of China. Mary is from Oklahoma. Now Bill and Cindy are from Arkansas, high school sweethearts. Charlie there is from California and Rose is from Arizona."

"Have you been involved in prepping long Andy," I asked.

"Got started in 1999 because of the Y2K thing, all three of us, although we didn't know each other at the time. We met up in the Sandbox and became friends. When we got back, all three of us applied for and were accepted as MP instructors at Fort Leonard Wood."

“As it happens,” Bill continued, “we all had similar tastes in firearms and similar thoughts on preparedness. We’d seen those Designated Marksmen in the sandbox using those M21s and decided we have one if we could. Anyway, we settled on the Springfield Armory Super Match because of the stock.”

“I was an Army DM over there fellas. The four Marines living on our other farm were all Marine DMs. I used the M21 over there but after careful consideration, settled on the Loaded model. The one thing we’re not short on is guns. Ammo may be a different consideration, eventually.”

“It shouldn’t be a problem,” Charlie chuckled, “not with ten tons of ordnance in that trailer.”

That got Jonas’s attention. “What did you bring Charlie?”

“M136 is the biggest, Mk211, M1022, 7.62x51mm, 5.56x45mm, 9mm, .45acp, and assorted grenades. We have every color of smoke left in inventory, frags, Thermate, flash bangs, and tear gas; plus some of those non-lethal shotgun rounds.”

Our head count had increased from 40 to 53. We broke up not long after the meal to let them get settled in their mobile homes. Marie and I took off for home on the snowmobile. When we left, small snowflakes were falling, but over the course of the half mile, they went to the size of a quarter, or larger. I put up the snowmobile and filled both wood boxes in the shack.

“Are we going to have another blizzard?”

“I really don’t know Marie; it looks like we might get another heavy snowfall.”

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Back at the house, Pete showed the three soldiers how to build a good fire in their wood stoves and Jonas and he helped each family bring in enough wood to fill their wood boxes. By the time they were finished, the house was also getting the quarter sized flakes and it was coming down something awful.

“Don, are you still up?”

“Yes we are Pete.”

“I think we’re in for the mother of all snowstorms. If you can’t make it tomorrow, just give me a call.”

“Will do. It’s snowing heavily here.”

When we went to bed, it was coming down hard and accumulating. The tracks from the snowmobile were filled in and the 3½' deep cut through the snow was beginning to fill. We didn't have much wind, maybe 5mph, from the northwest. During the night, the wind picked up and finally woke me around 3 am. The snow was coming down horizontally and I couldn't see anything with my Maglite. I added some wood to the fire and crawled back into bed.

"What's up?"

"The wind. We might get another blizzard after all. I added wood to the fire since it's pretty cold in here."

It took me a few minutes to get back to sleep because a second blizzard so soon after the previous one seemed rather bizarre. But, I drifted off and we didn't wake until 6:30. It was immediately apparent that even with the snowmobile, a trip to the house wasn't practical. Marie made breakfast while I called Pete and told him what I thought. He agreed and said he'd plow us out when the snow and wind stopped. After breakfast, Marie set out an onion and several large potatoes for soup. Next, she started on bread and asked if French loaves would be ok.

The snow didn't let up for 4 days and the wind for 6. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day when he should have been resting, Pete plowed us out and said to come up to the house for dinner, pot roast. Marie and I had gone through the French loaves so she started another batch of bread, intending to take warm bread when we went. I took the opportunity to refill the wood boxes and change the oil in the generator. The bread came out of the oven and she wrapped it in tea towels to keep it warm, packing the loaves in a basket.

It turned out that Sarah had baked bread too so we could choose between French loaves or regular loaves. Marie's bread followed the French recipe, flour, water, salt and yeast. The down side was that it didn't keep unless she made it using her sourdough. This was more of a business dinner than a family gathering. They'd picked up a ham radio operator in Idaho talking about the weather. There was another storm following this one and one behind that. Pete suggested we move to the house temporarily, after we weatherproofed our plumbing.

"Ok, if that's what you like. We'll go home for tonight and pack bags. Tomorrow before we come up, I'll drain the lines and add some antifreeze. I can turn off the water at the well and shut down the genset to save fuel."

"Bring any canned goods that might freeze."

"I'll have to use the pickup for that, but it will take a bit longer."

"How are the guys from Texas doing?"

“Complaining about the cold, about like you’d expect. They’ve been talking to someone they know down in San Antonio. After that China-Mexico thing, race relations down there have really gotten bad. Joseph said it mostly involved gangs, Latino vs. Aryan, but it’s been bad.”

There used to be a show on History Channel called Gangland. The show reported the history of the various gangs around the US, usually focusing on one gang per week. There were some bad actors out there; they’d kill for having the wrong color of bandana or tattoo. And sometimes, they didn’t seem to need a reason and would kill you just for being you. Since Joseph said Aryan rather than Anglo, it was two gangs facing off, perhaps the Aryan Brotherhood and Mara Salvatrucha. MS-13 had spread all over the US since starting in LA. We had no idea which gang had attacked us earlier and the only thing knew for sure was they were all dead.

In 1993, San Antonio FBI Special Agent-in-Charge Jeff Jamar called El Eme, often now the name given to the gang on the street, “the most dominant of the prison-spawned gangs operating in Texas,” when comparing it to the 10 other large-scale gangs active in US prisons at the time. In 1992, membership within prison was hovering at 700, while in 1998 it was just under 1,500. Today it continues to rise. Outside of prison, La EME is still an ominous presence, responsible for 10% of San Antonio's total homicide rate, with thousands of members estimated to be operating across the United States. You know who Jamar is, you just may not know that you know. He was the FBI man in charge at the Branch Davidian Compound. He lied about what happened and had the place dozed before the Texas Rangers could gather evidence.

While Marie and I had been snowed in, Pete and Jonas had done a head count and determined that of the 53 people here, 40 would be our primary force with 8 in reserve and 5 working only in support, tending to the injured and carrying ammo, ordnance or water. With nearly 5’ feet of snow on the ground and more on the way, I couldn’t see any way we be doing any fighting until spring.

After dinner, we left so we could get home and pack the canned goods into boxes, pack our suitcases and gather the clothes we might need or want, like our cowboy duds like the slickers and dusters plus both our felt and straw hats. I don’t like walking around in those cowboy boots with their high narrow heels and wear the Wally World work boots most of the time, unless I’m riding. I don’t care where they’re made; they’re well-made and reasonably inexpensive.

The storm rolled in two days later and of the three storms this year, was the worst, dropping 55” of snow and having winds of 40mph gusting to 60. Eventually, we strung a rope from the house to the barn to keep from getting lost. Coming from a bit further north, I’d seen a few snow storms and a blizzard, but nothing like 3 blizzards in a row. The coal furnace kept the house warm and most days it served as the community center of sorts. After the chores were done and everyone had eaten breakfast, at home, they’d come to the house for coffee and conversation. The men would separate into one

group and tell war stories and the women in another group and work on a meal, sew, gossip or a combination of all three.

Some of the meals utilized the UGR-Es, making for quick meals but most of the meals contained only what we produced on the farm. The farms on both sides of the road had their own gardens and each did their own canning. We'd finally run out of jars and some of the garden produce was frozen. I checked the map and Hyrum, Utah is north of Salt Lake City. According to the map legend, it is a small town. It's not far from Montpelier, ID (80 miles) so maybe we should take a 40' box trailer and a bag of gold with 3 riding shotgun and 1 driving. In about 4 months, that is.

After the storm ended, we had just enough clear days to plow the snow and push it into the ditch across from the driveway. The snow on the road had settled and was only about 50" deep, as Pete put it, four foot and a smidgen. The next storm blew in almost before we'd cleaned up from the second storm and it was worse. The temperature hovered around 30° while it snowed and blew. Then, as it cleared, it fell to 0° while it snowed and blew. Then, as it stopped snowing, it fell to 30° below zero and the wind whipped up.

"What's going on?"

"Global cooling, like in that movie?"

"Which movie?"

"I mentioned it before, *The Day After Tomorrow* with Dennis Quaid."

"That movie was nonsense, Don; temperatures don't fall that fast."

"How would you explain the temperature falling 60° in 12 hours?"

"A cold front?"

"In the autumn months, cold fronts rarely bring severe thunderstorms, but are known for bringing heavy and widespread rainstorms. These rainstorms sometimes bring flooding, and can move very slowly because cold fronts are more prone to slow movement in the fall. In the winter, cold fronts can bring severe cold spells, and heavy snowstorms. If moisture is not sufficient, cold fronts can pass without producing any precipitation at all, and the skies could be cloudless. Cold fronts do not produce the moisture; it will just condense against the cold air into cloud and rain droplets if there is enough water vapor in either air mass. Because the cold air wedges under the warm air, it forces it to rise, creating instability," Jonas replied.

"Cold fronts are the leading edges of a frigid air mass, hence the name cold front. They can bring several cold spells in the fall and winter. Very often, cold fronts are associated with deadly cold weather. Sometimes, though, cold fronts have no significant effect on

the weather. The cold fronts in the late fall become more polar in nature, and tend to bring very cold weather, and temperature drops by up to 30°F. When cold fronts come through, there is usually a quick, yet strong gust of wind, which shows that the cold front is passing. The effects from a cold front can last only a few hours to several weeks, depending on when the next weather front comes through. The air behind the front is cooler than the air it is replacing. The warm air is forced to rise so it cools. As the cooler air cannot hold as much moisture as warm air, clouds form and snow occurs.”

## The Hunting Shack – Chapter 26

“Would they drop the temperature that much Jonas?”

“I just said 30°, not 60°. I think that there has to be more to this than a cold front, Pete.”

“I don’t think it’s the nuclear winter; we’ve already done that.”

“Don, you were talking about a second nuclear winter,” Marie pointed out.

“I also said that I thought it was done, didn’t I?”

“I didn’t hear you say that.”

“Maybe I just thought it. I know I wrote it in my diary.”

“Any way you slice it, it’s damned cold.”

“Is this the beginning of some sort of pattern?”

“What do you mean?”

“I read about a volcano erupting a long time back. It was the summer Mary Shelley wrote Frankenstein.”

“That was Mount Tambora in the western Pacific. It changed the weather all over the world. Shelley and two others went to Switzerland for the summer and it turned cold. To entertain themselves, they had a writing contest. The fella with her was the man she later married, Percy Shelley and they were visiting Lord Byron. The bad weather was a volcanic winter.”

“Well, you don’t suppose that some volcano erupted do you?”

“I suppose it could have happened. Let’s increase our radio watch to 24/7 and see what we can pick up. IIRC, they had snow in New England in June in 1816, the year after the eruption.”

“That would be just perfect, a volcanic winter on top of a nuclear winter that was just beginning to clear.”

“At least it wasn’t Yellowstone. We’d have heard the eruption and be getting ash by now.”

“Pete, that’s like trying to make a silk purse outta a sow’s ear.”



“We’re just speculating; if we’re right, we going to have a year or two more of bad winters. The old saw says, “Red sky in morning, sailors warning; red sky at night, sailors delight.”

“Our new National Weather Service?”

“Not entirely, there’s the weather station in the shelter. There is something to do with the barometric pressure and cold fronts, I have to look it up to be sure, but I think that before the cold front occurs, the pressure falls, while it passes the pressure is at the lowest and begins to rapidly increase. After it passes the pressure continues to increase.”

It was pure speculation on our part; it could have been an extension of the nuclear winter or a volcanic winter. Absent any way to find out, that was all we could do. The snowstorms continued and most were accompanied with high winds, leading to blizzard conditions. It led to a serious problem when spring came, mud. We couldn’t get into the fields to plant anything and the garden went in very late. For the most part, we had to depend on the greenhouses for freshly grown food.

Since they had dirt floors, we could plant potatoes. With more mouths to feed, the spuds became an important part of our diet, adding bulk. We were ahead of the curve on canned food and using it up would provide more of the jars we needed. It was unlikely we’d make the trip to Hyrum or Montpelier. Unfortunately, we couldn’t produce much food for Camdenton. About the only thing we could provide them with was an assortment of meat and seeds to try their own gardens.

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“The roads are clear; I think we should try it.”

“Try what?”

“The trip to Utah and Idaho; who knows when it will snow again? I say get the stuff while the getting is good.”

“Whatever you say Uncle Pete. Two semis?”

“That should do it; on second thought, let’s take three because they may have a lot of the LTS food left in Idaho. We’ll use one of the Hummers to pull that 1,000 gallon diesel tanker so we don’t run out of fuel.”

That was a good idea because the maximum range of an M1114 was 275 miles. It was almost 1,300 miles to Hyrum and another 80 to Montpelier. I doubted 1,000-gallons of diesel would be enough and suggested that to Pete.

“Well, find a second 1,000-gallon tanker and we’ll pull two.”

Camdenton traded us the tanker for a live beef. A spare tire went for one hog each, regardless of the size of the tire. That came after we told them that we were making a trip looking for food because we couldn't plant the fields this year. The Chief of Police was getting the full price for his Thompson, a little at a time. Marie and I took the Hummer with the M240. The other Hummers sported the M2A1s. If we'd have been smart, we'd have picked up an Mk-19 from Fort Leonard Wood.

Before we left, Pete imposed the rationing of electricity for a second time to reduce our biodiesel usage. Then, we saddled up and headed west. We skirted every major city along the way; some had been hit with a warhead and others just because. Our main route was I-80 and we planned to take it to I-15 to get to Salt Lake City. We bypassed Omaha and picked the interstate up in Lincoln. We were good until we got to Cheyenne where there'd been several strikes. We bypassed Salt Lake City and arrived in Hyrum about 24 hours after we left.

We took all of the canning jars at the location plus all of the lids. We also took an additional 10 41.5 quart All American canners and every package of canning spice we could find. Since they also sold other products, we took advantage of the price and loaded half of the second semi-trailer. I think we're going to need another building on the farm.

From there, we drove north to Montpelier. This place wasn't abandoned and we had to buy their products with gold. The bright side was that they were valuing gold at \$2,250 an ounce. The down side was they wouldn't sell us all we wanted, at any price. We loaded every super pail they'd sell us and all of Mountain House foods available. We had also picked up motorized Country Living Mills in Hyrum and could grind all of the grain.

"It sure would be nice if I could get the price they charge for wheat from the crops we grow."

"Think positively, we picked up a lot of beans and rice. We can grow beans, but rice wouldn't be easy."

"They oughtta carry coffee, they'd get rich."

"Same thing with toilet paper, if you think about it."

"We have plenty of toilet paper from Wisconsin and coffee since we went to the Folgers plant. That police chief is starting to get on my nerves. I'm glad we didn't tell him about some of those trips we made."

That was our only trip that summer and we got back with the jars just in time, the garden dried off and began producing. Sarah and the other women had a discussion in our absence and had decided that they didn't really want to provide food to the people in Camdenton because it didn't seem to be appreciated. Given the limitation of our storage space, they relented but rotated the canned goods, selling the oldest.

We could get through this winter with our supply of livestock feed, principally because of the canola cake. Pete started looking for another section of land to use for canola; we'd need a lot of biodiesel to replenish what we were burning. When he couldn't find suitable acreage, we started emptying the truck stop tanks, adding PRI products and the anti-gelling solution. The tanks were nearly full when it began snowing again.

With three men for escorts, Marie, Sarah, Molly and the others hauled load after load of canned goods and whole grains to Camdenton. They traded three of the motorized Country Living Mills and told them to grind their own flour and corn meal. They also provided an oats roller (flaker) to make oatmeal. They, in turn, got back the empty canning jars but no lids. We had more lids than we could use and what we had might expire before we could use them up.

Any jar that failed to seal would have the lid replaced and canned a second time and the resulting vegetable designated for stews. The one thing that they could can all winter was meat and with a total of 12 All American pressure canners, and a large number of stock pots, that's what they did; canning principally beef and chicken. Pork bellies and loins were brined and smoked for bacon, picnics and hams were brined and smoked for ham and the hocks brined and smoked to add to beans. The pork chucks, called butts, were sliced on the saw to make pork steak for the freezers. The turkeys were butchered and frozen.

The town bought the LTS food from Idaho and paid a heavy price because Pete wanted to be compensated for the time, fuel and risk involved in securing those supplies. He wanted every ounce of his gold back to pay for those LTS foods and more. Included therein were several cases of the heirloom seeds if someone in town just grew enough to allow them to harvest seeds.

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Only the  $\frac{1}{8}$  mile of road between the two farms was kept open, and if time permitted the  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile to the shack. We logged until the weather forced us to shut down and brought coal from the power plant on Montrose Lake. We were, indeed, very well off, considering the snow was ass deep on a 9' Indian. The locker plant continued to process our meat for the freezer in the same proportion as before, helping to keep our freezers filled and giving them meat to sell in town.

Most of the folks who hadn't been able to get off the farm were developing serious cases of cabin fever and several of us began to discuss what we might be able to do to eliminate or ameliorate the matter. A community center would help and we talked about where to locate it, settling on our side of the road, across from the other farm. There was a 20 some acre field, pasture according to Pete.

"If we do that, we can park all of the extra vehicles there behind the building. It's getting very cluttered around here."

“Do you think we might be able to put in a large kitchen, Pete?”

“What for Marie?”

“We could concentrate our canning operation if we could get a minimum of 12 propane burners. You can get an extra propane tank can't you?”

“Probably. We can move the 90kw generator, find another diesel tank, run a water line and install a septic system. I'd rather get a modular steel building to reduce the construction time. We could look around for a large screen TV, VHS/DVD/Blu-ray player and maybe a juke box, assuming they still make jukeboxes. What else would you like in the center?”

“If we have a kitchen, we could always have a grill, oven, deep fat fryer, a toaster, a refrigerator and upright freezer. We'd need furniture for the TV area, tables and chairs for the dining area, restaurant equipment, barware and maybe a CO<sub>2</sub> pressured beer dispenser.”

“We'll try to track down a building Marie. You can come up with a list of furnishings.”

“I'll work on it.”

“From now on, no one leaves the farm without full battle rattle.”

I had to groan, wearing full battle rattle wasn't any fun.

“What's full battle rattle?”

“In addition to what you usually wear and/or carry, full battle rattle is army slang for wearing full body armor, approximately 50 pounds of it. We'll be wearing Point Blank body armor with level IV plates.”

## The Hunting Shack – Chapter 27

“Interceptor?”

“Yeah. Thank Jonas for that.”

“Do we have enough?”

“We have around \$150,000 worth; more than enough to go around.”

“How did you come by that?”

“The Army declared the Interceptor obsolete in 2006 and replaced it with the Improved Outer Tactical Vest. The Corps replaced their Interceptor with the Modular Tactical Vest. I directed shipments of new Interceptor to my storage bin. Besides, the armor itself isn't what's so heavy, it's the extras you hang on it. It's brand new, still packed in the plastic wrapping that prevents aging.”

“Why the sudden change Pete?”

“We'll be moving farther afield to get what we need for the community center. We'll be traveling in smaller groups. Plus the folks in Camdenton can't be happy with what we were able to provide them with in terms of food.”

Interceptor came in multiple sizes and it took a few days to get everyone set up with their body armor. Time was on our side, Marie was busy making lists and Pete and Jonas were discussing their options for locating, transporting and erecting the community center. Those of us not directly involved did the chores and did our best to stay out from underfoot. The youngest person among the group was 13 and the small size Interceptor fit them, but was almost too much for them to wear.

We still had no idea of what was behind the severe weather. The most common speculation was a volcano erupting somewhere that had filled the atmosphere with dust. To make matters worse, radio reception was poor and when we did manage to contact a far off source, they usually spoke a language we couldn't understand. French and English may be the official languages of the UN, but not everybody in the world was a UN representative and there was no UN since the war when New York had been destroyed. Even a bad thing like a GTW has its good points.

“We have decided to assemble a Butler Building. Butler Manufacturing Company – Regional Manufacturing Locations are located in Annville, PA; Jackson, TN; Laurinburg, NC; Monterrey, Mexico; San Marcos, TX and Visalia, CA. I think we'll try Jackson first.”

“And, if they don't have what we need?”

“San Marcos. We’ll need 3 flatbeds, 4 hummers, 3 fuel trailers and 3 persons per vehicle. We’ll get another Hummer at Leonard Wood and equip this one with an Mk19. We’ll also need 3 M2HBs so we can leave the M2A1 machineguns here. We’ll go there as soon as the roads clear enough to let us get there.”

“Why wait, we have that snow plow Jonas’s friends used to get here.”

“If the snow let’s up, we’ll try it. Good thinking and it will save a trip later. We’ll use the 10-ton HEMTT M977 Cargo Truck and pull that military trailer. We’d better get the last of it before someone else figures out that the Fort is deserted.”

“Let’s look around for a tanker while we’re at it.”

“Would a M978 2,500 gallon fuel tanker be large enough?”

“Sure Jonas, but I’d still want to pull the 2 1,000-gallon tankers.”

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It was a month before we got to the Fort. As the snow began to settle or melt due to the sun, we began our trek to Jackson, TN. Jackson is just south of I-40 and about  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the way from Memphis to Nashville. We got lucky in one way and unlucky in another. Oh, we found a building package that was perfect for our needs; what we didn’t find were the furnishings we wanted that Marie had listed. Never give a woman a blank piece of paper and tell her to list what she wants. Her list included:

- 2 six burner Viking stoves with ovens
- 1 pizza oven
- 1 Frymaster two well deep fat fryer
- 1 Grill
- Restaurant size toaster
- Walk-in freezer
- Walk-in refrigerator
- Assorted pots and pans including commercial 1½# bread pans
- Assorted kitchen utensils and knives with sharpener
- Restaurant grade china and 18 gauge stainless steel flatware
- 8’ folding tables
- Padded folding chairs (stackable will do)
- Large screen plasma TV – at least 50”
- VHS/DVD/Blu-Ray player

In addition to the equipment list, we needed basic furnishings like a hot water heater, bathroom fixtures for two bathrooms (sink and stool, at least), a large multi-fuel (wood and coal) furnace, air conditioning, lighting, electrical fixtures and so forth. Our take on the list was that Marie intended to move some of the home based tasks to the Commu-

nity Center, like baking bread and, of course, canning. With that in mind, we got a slightly larger building so we'd have enough storage space.

It took all three trucks just to haul the building back to the farm, so we had an excuse for not getting the things Marie had listed. We discussed alternatives on the way home and decided on trying Springfield for the shopping. As soon as the first truck was unloaded, we sent it and a Hummer to Springfield, list in hand. They returned 10 days later with everything on the list plus the basic furnishings.

In the meantime, we had leveled a spot, dug footings, formed and poured them. We had also installed a new septic system with an extra-large tank and large leach field. We made a private deal with a well driller from Camdenton and he drilled a new deep well that could put out 35gpm of good water. He got a side of beef, a hog, grain and a grinding mill plus some of the LTS food from Idaho. We hadn't installed any plumbing, yet. We needed to see what we'd need for the furnishings. We did get the pipes and wiring, though.

Early on, they'd found a Viking dealer. Viking makes a wide range of products intended for home use. Instead of the walk-in refrigerator and freezer, they got multiple Viking refrigerators only or freezers only. The stoves were the six-burner 60" with ovens and they brought back three, all gas. The pizza ovens were used and came from a closed up pizza kitchen. Viking equipment was originally designed for the home, not a restaurant. In late 2008, Viking finally began manufacturing actual restaurant equipment.

Some of the things on the list came from a restaurant supply firm. Not realizing that we were gathering wiring and plumbing pipes, they went to both electrical suppliers and plumbing suppliers. When they couldn't find a combined VHS/DVD/Blu-Ray, they opted for a DVD/VHS unit and separate Blu-Ray player. The TV was a Pioneer Elite - KURO / 60" Class / 1080p / 60Hz / Plasma HDTV, Model: PRO-151FDI. They brought 2 in case one went bad. Ultimately, we used both; one hooked to the VHS/DVD player and the other to the Blu-Ray player. But, I'm getting ahead of the events as they occurred. For a second summer, the fields were too muddy to plant. One group began to search for abandoned farms with supplies of livestock feed. Our group began the task of erecting the steel building.

Our first step was to install the water, septic and gas lines. We then poured the building's floor. After a few days of letting the concrete set up so we could walk on it, we began to erect the building, using a crane we borrowed from the city yard. The building had 12' high walls and a peaked roof allowing us to use some of the attic for storage. It took about 3½ weeks to erect the building and add the roof. We installed outer doors and an airlock so we wouldn't gain heat in the summer or lose heat during the winter.

We then moved the generator which had been freshly rebuilt using a parts kit from Cummins in Springfield. The orientation of the building was east-west and we planned to install PV panels as soon as we could locate enough of them, charge controllers, in-

verters and new deep cycle gel-cell batteries. For now, we simply wired the place put in bathroom walls and furnishings plus the various kitchen furnishings.

“What we need here is a counter with stools and maybe a few booths,” Jonas remarked.

“Don, Jonas, you and I are going to Springfield for more shopping. I wonder if that restaurant supply firm had any booths or stools.”

“I’ll ask the guys and find out. They’re out looking for feed, but I can use the radio.”

They said they saw booths but were unsure about the stools. They did see a café counter in the warehouse. I related that to Jonas who told Pete and we were off the next day for additional equipment. We left it to the others to finish installing the kitchen equipment and entertainment equipment. Once we arrived in Springfield, we didn’t go to the restaurant supply. Instead, Pete got the yellow pages and we started to clean out coffee services offices of coffee, tea and a large Bunn commercial coffee maker. Only then did we go to the restaurant supply; where we got the booths, counter and 12 stools.

We made one more stop, to a company that had a juke box service. We got the machine and one of every music DVD we could find. The jukebox had a computer that could be programmed with the discs and song tracks on each one. We had quite the assortment, Country, Pop, Rock, Jazz, Bluegrass and a Misc category. The machine was Touch Tunes digital juke box. When we got back, we put three of the teens on the project of programming the juke box because it would take a long time to load 1,000 DVDs and the approximate 10,000 songs they contained.

The outside garden went in late and produced limited crops. The two medium sized greenhouses could have produced more, had we gotten larger buildings. They were all we could find at the time in Springfield. Since we couldn’t produce canola, after the building was done, we refilled our tanks from the tanks at the truck stop. We stuck them after we were done and they averaged about 75% empty. We have to find another source if we couldn’t plant canola next year. Let me back up.

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*Quote Plus the folks in Camdenton can’t be happy with what we were able to provide them with in terms of food. End Quote*

He had that right. While we were working on the building, the Police Chief came out to remind us that they’d need a fair amount of food.

“Then grow it Chief! You see those fields? They’re all mud and we can’t plant. You see that miserable garden we planted this year? Even with the food we’re growing in the greenhouses, we’re barely growing enough for ourselves. We have over fifty people here and we come first.”



“You can’t make another trip and get more food?”

“First off, we mostly cleaned them out. Second off, we’re low on diesel fuel because we can’t make biodiesel this year. Finally, it’s too late in the year to make a trip to Montpelier, Idaho.”

“You seem to have plenty of time to build buildings.”

“We’re not building it, we’re assembling it. It’s a Butler building that we got in Jackson, Tennessee. We got the things to equip it in Springfield.”

“Do tell. Why do you need it?”

“That’s not really your concern, now is it?”

“You miss my point. Why aren’t you out looking for more food?”

“We needed this building and will have enough for our needs.”

“Now see here, Pete, we need that food. If you won’t give it up, we may be forced to come and take it!”

“I’d sure like to see you try, Chief. We’re rounding up some grain and can sell you some of that along with the meat; I’m not sure we can provide everything you need or that we have a responsibility to do so.”

“I’m beginning to regret giving you the Thompson.”

“I didn’t ask for it, but I’m willing to give it back, one bullet at a time.”

“Is that a threat?”

“More like a promise. Is there anything else? If not, we’d like to get back to assembling the building. When harvest is over and we have an idea of what food we can spare, we’ll bring it to town and sell it like we have in the past.”

One thing was clear, the food wouldn’t be a gift and Pete wasn’t willing to barter for labor. He’d said at one time that he didn’t need a bunch of townies on the farm screwing things up. Besides, with only two sections of land and a population of 53, we didn’t need any help.

◦

With everything completed except a final garden harvest, the residents spent a little time on the range. We then saddled up every horse we had 4 years old or older, split up and rode the fence lines, making repairs as needed. They returned the crane and picked up

the two large dump trucks for another trip to Montrose Station to get more coal. Most of us went to the timber and harvested the deadfalls and standing dead trees. If the winter stayed cold this year, we'd need lots of fuel.

## The Hunting Shack – Chapter 28

As soon as the kitchen was installed in the community center, the canning operation was moved there. We found a 3,300-gallon propane tank, filled it then got another load and topped off the propane tanks on both farms. A third trip to Lebanon filled the delivery trucks.

The results of the search for livestock feed were moderately successful. We got a lot of alfalfa hay, some corn, soybeans and oats. We bagged several bags of the three grains and added 500-pounds each of rice and pinto beans plus a small portion of the canned vegetables. The livestock went to the locker plant with the usual deal and Pete worked a deal with a grocery store to retail the other food. We finished everything just in time with an early snowstorm hitting the week after harvest.

While we had a mechanic, we were short on repair parts and the arrangement with the grocery store was a barter arrangement for a long list of repair parts. We delivered the food on trust and the store owner put several of his clerks on locating the parts. That included motor oil, grease, gas, air and oil filters plus several sets of new disc brakes, glow and sparkplugs and a few fancier repair parts like tie rods, shocks and so forth.

We waited until we were all locked down for the winter before opening the community center. The center had the best menu in the rural area and the food was free although tips were greatly appreciated for those running the kitchen. That was done by the female half of our group, but only because they were much better cooks. We men folk pitched in and helped with chores like grinding the grain. The teens were still working on the juke box and didn't expect it to be fully programmed for a few more months.

We built shelves for the VHS tapes, DVD movies and Blu-Ray movies. We also built shelves to hold much of the canned goods and kept our potatoes and onions bagged down in the shelter. We used the ventilation system to draw in cold air so we could maintain a temperature close to 40°. The kitchen was very well stocked and had such amenities as a wall mounted French fry cutter, baked hamburger and hot dog buns to complement our supply of franks the locker plant made for us using the pig intestines. In addition the locker plant had a machine to turn out ¼ pound hamburger patties made from extra lean ground beef (15%). The final product they produced when we requested it was breaded pork tenderloins.

We soon realized that we didn't have enough freezer space and Pete, Jonas and I went back to Springfield and picked up 2 more Viking upright freezers. On the way back, a blizzard started to blow and we were fortunate to make it home.

While the initial intent was to stop using the big house as a meeting place and using the new building for the coffee klatch, it soon became apparent that people were asking for sandwiches around lunch time. It wasn't as if we hadn't anticipated it; we did. However, it was surprising how many people wanted to eat there and have some genuine restaurant food.

One unusual feature of the building was the rifle racks and pegs for hanging web gear. Not your typical community center. And yes, we were still operating with full battle rattle except when we were doing chores. Even then, it was handy and was like an American Express Card.

Near Thanksgiving, the grocery radioed and asked about turkeys. If we could provide them he wanted 50, all around 25-pounds. He'd go 2 ounces of gold for the 50. We realized that was \$60 per bird wholesale so we started slaughtering and cleaning 55 birds. He went on to explain that the town had decided to have one large Thanksgiving celebration and he estimated 50 birds that size would give most everyone about 8 ounces of turkey. We delivered 52 birds to town and got set up to have a community Thanksgiving of our own at the community building.

There was some discussion about that event in town and Pete and Jonas decided we'd better keep a guard patrol running, just in case. BTW, the road between the hunting shack and the house was kept clear, as was the  $\frac{1}{8}$  mile of road between the two farms and the access to the community building. I don't believe I mentioned the culvert and driveway between the road and the community building, although you should have taken that for granted. Others installed that while we were building shopping. There was also a graveled parking lot.

Marie and I had come a long way from when I asked her if she double bought staples, a lifetime ago. We were better off in every way imaginable and had even managed to pick up a few tenth ounce gold coins ourselves and about \$200 in face value pre-65 silver coins. Because most of the others had family, we volunteered to ride guard during Thanksgiving Dinner and allow the others with children to have some family time. Over time, a second scabbard had been added to hold the shotguns and on Thanksgiving I was wearing my Miami Classic rig with the P-14 and carrying the M1A across the saddle. Marie had her Beretta in a 1942 Tanker holster with her Mini-14 across her saddle. We both had Motorola radios and saddlebags loaded with extra ammo, just in case.

There was a very light snowfall coming down although it didn't restrict visibility. We rode a circuit starting at the farm across from the community building and down and back along the fence on the farm. We then did the same with the other farm, after which we started the circuit over. We had made it all the way to the end of the property and had started back when a bullet whizzed past my ear. We broke into a gallop to put some distance between the shooter and us before pulling up and radioing the community building.

"This is Don. We have shots fired about a quarter mile from the end of the property. I don't see anyone but they have to be out there. We'll tie the horses and make our stand here."

"This is Jonas; we'll be there ASAP, maybe 15 minutes."

Just then, another shot rang out, kicking up a little snow where it hit between the two of us.

“Marie, take the M1A and I’ll get the shotguns.”

“Be careful.”

“You know me.”

“I do; that’s why I said be careful.”

It took a minute to loosen the saddlebags and grab the shotguns. I left the Marlins in the other scabbards figuring that if we needed them we were in deep do-do.

A third shot came and Marie said, “I see him. About 400 yards down the road in a pickup. I can’t tell how many there are.”

A fourth shot came from a different firearm indicating there were at least 2 shooters.

“This is Jonas. How are you doing?”

“Ok for now, but there are at least 2 shooters. I’m going for the one I can make out with my M1A.”

“Hold on a minute, we’re bringing up the Hummer with the Mk-19. Don’t expose yourself.”

Sure enough, the Hummer was coming up and was nearly abreast of us. It was a short burst, thump, thump, thump. The pickup exploded in a ball of flames and whoever was aboard it didn’t have a chance. The second Hummer, with a M2HB mounted, passed the first Hummer and moved closer, just in case. Eventually, the fire burned itself out and there wasn’t much left besides the hull of the vehicles and 3 badly charred bodies. The driver was wearing a Police badge and closer inspection revealed Chief. One of the two in the back was also wearing a Police badge, but without the distinctive marking. The third person had no badge, and was a woman. I hadn’t seen bodies like this since Iraqi Freedom and I lost my appetite for turkey. Marie hadn’t gone with me to investigate, fortunately.

We rode back to the barn and unsaddled. I told Marie to go eat and I’d rub down the horses and bring our gear. I was in no hurry, taking my time. I gathered her Mini-14, my M1A plus both shotguns and walked to the community center. Since I still didn’t have much of an appetite, I made a turkey sandwich and put a little of the other things like mashed potatoes, dressing and gravy on a plate. It sure was good and before I knew it, I had cleaned my plate and refilled it with some of the things I hadn’t taken the first time, sweet potatoes, green bean casserole and cranberry sauce, plus a second turkey sandwich.

The four from Texas, Joseph, Rick, Juan and Jose took the second guard shift, using two Hummers; the same two that had responded to our call. Mike and one other, I don't know which one, rode shotgun with them. I hadn't realized it and no one said anything, but I had a bullet cut in my slicker and tear in the duster I was wearing underneath. Jonas saw it and said he could fix me right up. He got a roll of duct tape in a color matching my slicker, yellow, and patched the rip.

Duct tape's versatility and holding power are evidenced by its nickname in engineering circles: the ultimate material. It is commonly used in situations that require a strong, flexible adhesive, particularly when exposure to the elements is a concern. A more specialized product, commonly known as gaffer tape, is preferred in entertainment circles, as it does not leave a sticky residue when removed and is more easily torn into thin strips for precise application. Gaffer tape comes in assorted colors. While the repair was barely noticeable, I vowed to get a new slicker and duster when we towed the pickup to Camdenton.

On Black Friday, we loaded the pickup shell with the bodies on a lowboy and made the trip to Camdenton. We pulled in front of the Police Department, hooked a chain on the pickup axle and around a light pole and pulled the lowboy forward, letting the pickup and bodies crash to the ground. Marie and I headed to the store for my replacement clothing while the others, in the 4 Hummers took questions. There really wasn't much to say, you mess with the bull, you get the horn. And, no, we don't have any more food.

As it was, we need to be looking for food for ourselves if the weather didn't let up. We hadn't tried looking for grocery delivery trucks and by now, everything canned or bottled would be spoiled. When a clear spot in the weather did come, we did, in fact go looking for staples. During the 3 weeks we looked, we found around a ton of bread flour, 300-pounds of general purpose flour, about 500-pounds corn meal, lentils, pinto, and navy beans, Quaker Oats, yeast jars and shortening and oil plus several cases of coffee and tea.

It appeared that some of the trucks had been salvaged early on because they were empty. Others had been salvaged later and all of the staples removed. Our biggest find was a truck loaded with PV panels, charge controllers, inverters and deep cycle batteries with the electrolyte stored separately. We hooked our tractor to that trailer and brought it home. Rather than look further, we paused to install our new electrical system. I welded racks for the batteries while others installed PV panels and ran the wiring. The panels were ~27v and the batteries 12v. We used the battery cables we found in the trailer to connect several rows of 2 batteries in series in a parallel network.

Each panel had a maximum output of 200 watts and we had 200 panels. We could produce 40kw and store it in batteries for use as needed. We installed the ATS so the generator would kick in when the inverters didn't produce enough power. Up to now, we'd been fueling the generator directly from a 10,000-gallon tanker. Jonas and Pete decided to go looking for another underground, double walled fuel tank and bigger was better.

This warranted another trip to Conroe, Texas where we left 10,000-gallon tanks sitting. Our reading of PAW fiction was paying off big time.

After much discussion, we decided to take 3 trucks like the last time and get all of the large tanks we could find. Nobody could remember how many 10,000-gallon tanks we'd left. Once we arrived, we found 2 tanks. Jonas asked if we wanted to try a trip to Brenham, TX which was to the west.

"What's in Brenham?"

"Ever hear of a place named Ammunition to Go?"

"Sure have; is that where they are?"

"Yep. We'll need gold to buy the ammo in case anyone is there. They had all kinds of ammo after that big run in late 2008 and 2009. It included everything from military surplus to exotic shotgun ammo."

"What kind of military surplus?"

"Radway Green, for one. In stripper clips in bandoleers in battle packs in wooden crates."

"I bought some of the Radway, good ammo; it was expensive, a grand for 1,500-rounds plus shipping."

"You want to check the place out?"

"If it's ok with Pete, sure."

The man's name was John and he'd take gold and silver for the ammo; at the current rate, no less. The current rate was \$1,500/\$30 per ounce gold/silver. We got a little of this, a little of that, many kinds of the exotic shotgun ammo he had plus the last of his Radway. We didn't pay freight, but he charged us sales tax; 8.25%. We bought 15,000-rounds of the Radway and with the shotgun ammo, our total was 8 ounces of gold, any brand would do. The shells were a bit of buck and ball, a few flechettes, but nothing non-lethal. The only real problem we had was the flatbed. We swapped it out for a 53' box trailer in Brenham and had it filled before we got home.

## The Hunting Shack – Chapter 29

I think we hit every Wally-World (China Mart) on the way back, looking for toilet paper, coffee, staples, etc. Sometimes we got lucky; but most times it was a waste of time. However, every little bit helped and it did add up. Considering our trip to Wisconsin, I wonder what those folks in Camdenon would give for a roll of toilet paper.

When we pulled in behind the community center, we went inside to find out who those pickups belonged to. It was some of the community elders from Camdenon. I could see Pete's neck started to turn redder and his hand was resting on his pistol.

"What do you want?"

"Supplies. We figured out what the Chief tried to pull on Thanksgiving and we had nothing to do with that. Those people were the Chief, his Lieutenant and the Chief's wife."

"Sez you."

"Pete, you know me. Have I ever lied to you?"

"Yeah, I still don't believe you caught an 18" Bass."

"Other than the fish story?"

"Not that I know of."

"We're desperate and if you can provide food, we'll be happy for any you can provide."

"We have picked up a few things, but it won't be cheap. We won't gouge you but we only did what you could have done on your own if anyone had the cojones. We've invested time, fuel and a terrible risk to get this stuff."

"What can you provide?"

"We have a bunch of staples on the box trailer and some toilet paper. What we have fills most of the 53' trailer."

"Coffee? Cigarettes? Kitchen matches? What exactly do you have?"

"Everything you mentioned and much, much more. You find replacement fuel for what we used up and we'll let you have the stuff with a 10% markup. We'll go through the grocery store and he can set the prices."

"The fuel is all bad."

"That doesn't matter, we can restore it. What do you have to use to pay for this stuff?"



“We have all of your canning jars, a few cases of lids, some firearms, ammunition; hell, anything you think has value to you.”

“We’ve been planting our crops using heirloom seeds, remember those?”

“Yeah, are they the ones that breed true?”

“That’s the kind. We’re short on fertilizer and the fields have been too muddy to plant the last two years. We’ve pretty much collected all of the abandoned hay and grain in the area. We have a lot of pork, some beef, some chickens and some turkeys. How about you top off all our propane tanks and leave full delivery trucks; fill our fuel tanks, both gas and diesel and give us the run of the town to see what we can use?”

“Don’t forget the jars and lids.”

“That stuff you mentioned in the beginning was a foregone conclusion. Can you live with these terms?”

“I have your word you won’t gouge us?”

“You do. Remember something, our dear leader raised the price of tobacco products and the states followed suit. Cigarettes were running \$50 a carton before the HEMP. We even have some roll-your-own stuff, but it wasn’t cheap either, \$40 for a pound of cigarette tobacco, a buck a pack for papers, but we’ll throw in some of those Top rolling gadgets.”

“Great, thanks.”

“The meat will go to the locker plant to be cut and wrapped. The grocery store will sell it. As you know, we’ve been giving the locker plant some meat to sell in exchange for processing our meat. They make a pretty good hot dog. They form most of our lean ground beef in ¼-pound patties.”

“What’s a beef go for?”

“One ounce of gold. A hog is roughly a tenth ounce of gold. We’re using a standard exchange rate of \$1,500 for gold and \$30 for silver unless you want to give us more. We’ll take pre-65 90% silver coins, American Gold Eagles in all four sizes, one ounce Silver Eagles, Krugerrands in all four denominations but no 24 carat gold coins or gold jewelry. Can you handle that?”

“I’m not sure, but we give it our best shot. Oops, wrong expression, considering.”

“Considering we have a Mk-19 grenade launcher, a Milkor M32 Multiple Grenade Launcher, 2 M2A1 machine guns, 2 M240s, 3 M2HB, LAW rockets, M136 AT-4 rockets,

2 M82A1M Barrett rifles, 1 Tac-50, more .308 NATO rifles than we can count and some 5.56 NATO plus about 50 cowboy rifles, the same number of six guns and pistols for everyone, it was, indeed the wrong expression. But, if you're feeling particularly brave, cry havoc and let loose the dogs of war."

"Shakespeare?"

"Yes, Julius Caesar."

"We'll pass."

"Good for you. You folks are going to need to develop some trade skills for earning money and we'll do our best to keep you supplied with food and the necessities of life. What are you doing for heat?"

"Firewood, but it doesn't burn too good."

"I know where to get coal if you can use that."

"Some can, I'm sure. Where are you getting it?"

"A KCPL generating station."

"What about wood?"

"You're doing it wrong. Harvest the deadfalls first followed by standing dead trees, it will be ready to burn."

"Where do we get the propane?"

"Lebanon. Try truck stops for diesel and gasoline. We mostly need diesel. When we can plant, we can produce about as much diesel as we use, roughly 127-gallons per acre."

"Where do you get the chemicals?"

"We produce pure ethanol and salvage the other chemicals we need to replace what we use up."

"Fine, but where do you get the chemicals?"

"Anywhere we can find them."

"Do you use a lot?"

“Yep. However, I was pretty well stocked and we’re still using what I had before the HEMP. Making ethyl-esters biodiesel using ethanol is a tricky process, not as simple as making methyl esters with methanol. But it can be done.”

“Tell me more.”

“Well, Ethanol in liters =  $0.2738 \times$  Amount of oil in liters and the amount of KOH in Kg =  $0.013 \times$  Amount of oil in liters

“Using a 100 liter batch of oil as an example, the KOH used reacts with 1.07kg of ethanol to produce 1.95kg of potassium ethoxide. This mixture now contains  $(27.4 \times 0.789) - 1.07 = 20.55$ kg of free ethanol and 1.07kg of ethanol as potassium ethoxide catalyst. Any water added to the entire system reverses the above reaction and quenches a proportional amount of the potassium ethoxide catalyst. One part of water can quench up to  $84.15/18.02 = 4.67$  parts of catalyst. The ethanol-KOH mixture is then poured into the oil (maintained at 60° Celsius) and the transesterification process occurs.

“100 liters (91kg) of oil reacts with 13.1kg of ethanol. The 21.62kg (or 27.4L) of ethanol used in the batch represents  $21.62/13.1 \times 100 = 165\%$  of that required for complete transesterification of 100 liters of oil. (A 65% excess over the theoretical requirement). This value changes according to the oil used and thus mastering of the process can take time. The steps are:

1. Oil is measured.
2. The required amount of ethanol is placed into a small covered container.
3. The required amount of potassium hydroxide is quickly weighed, with minimum atmospheric exposure.
4. The solid potassium hydroxide is added to all of the ethanol which is then vigorously stirred in the covered container until completely dissolved. At this point the dissolved KOH is presumed to have been converted to potassium ethoxide catalyst.
5. The ethanol-catalyst mixture is poured into the oil in the main reactor and stirred rapidly. Mixing is continued for 6 hours at 50°+ temperature. The reaction mixture usually changes to a turbid orange-brown color within the first few minutes; then it changes to a clear transparent brown color; finally, as the reaction is completed, the mixture again becomes somewhat turbid and orange-brown colored due to the emulsified free glycerol which has been formed.
6. In the completed reaction, the glycerol begins to separate immediately upon cessation of stirring, and the settling is mostly complete in one hour. After initial settling, the entire contents of the reaction vessel are again mixed together and stirred vigorously for 40 minutes. After the first 20 minutes of re stirring, water is added at 15% of the initial volume of oil used in the reaction. Stirring should continue an additional 20 minutes af-

ter the water is added for a total of 40 minutes of re stirring. This mixture is then allowed to settle. A longer separation time facilitates the washing process. Remixing the glycerol layer with the ester layer while adding water has the effect of collecting and removing impurities and products of incomplete reaction from the ester. The washing phase can then proceed at a more rapid pace than if the remixing stage were left out.

7. Wash the given mixture as usual.”

“How many batches per day?”

“We usually make one.”

“Soybeans?”

“Nah, we switched to canola to get a higher output.”

“How much can you produce?”

“Up to 219,000-gallons per year.”

“Jeezus.”

“I don’t take the Lord’s name in vain, watch it.”

“Ok, when can you bring in the food?”

“Give use a few minutes to get some coffee, wash up and tap a kidney and we’ll be right in. Soy beans are only good for about 47 gallons of diesel per acre, while canola produces 127-gallons and the canola cake is good livestock feed.”

“We’ll see you in a bit.”

“The ammo is in the sleeping compartment isn’t it?”

“Yep.”

“Pull that out before we head to town. I don’t want to give them ammo that they might turn around and use on us.”

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“You don’t trust him?”

## The Hunting Shack – Chapter 30

“Not completely, no. We hold off delivery of the livestock until we see how this part of the deal works out. Just in case, make it full battle rattle.”

We were 45 minutes getting to Camdenton and pulled the truck up to the loading dock.

“They explain the deal to you?”

“No, what did you work out?”

“We want 110% of the price the stuff was going for before the HEMP.”

“Wholesale or retail price?”

“Retail. We agreed to accept canning jars, if the rims are ok and take their supply of canning lids. We’ll bring livestock to the locker in phase 2. That won’t happen until they hold to the bargain on propane and diesel.”

“But the fuel is no good.”

“That doesn’t matter, we have PRI-D, PRI-G and anti-gelling solution.”

“Where did you get that?”

“Houston at the manufacturing plant. By the way, in light of that trouble with the Chief of Police, all deliveries will be accompanied with a pair of Hummers, minimum.”

“What else will you take?”

“Don’t worry about that, we’ll do our own shopping around town. But if anyone comes up with gold or silver the prices are \$1,500 for gold and \$30 for silver. Keep in mind that that junk silver is only 90% pure. You’ll have to use your calculator to do the math.”

“How?”

“Well, a \$1,000 face value contains 715 ounces of silver and that equals 2,000 halves, 4,000 quarters or 10,000 dimes. The half contains 0.3575 oz at \$30 or \$10.73. a quarter \$5.36 and a dime \$2.15. As for the gold, the one ounce are \$1,500, the half-ounce \$750, the quarter-ounce \$375 and the one-tenth ounce \$150. Accept only 22 carat gold coins; we won’t take 24 carat anything.”

“Why?”

“24 carat is soft and can be shaved, so I’m not interested. Let’s start unloading and you write the stuff down. I expect a proper counting or there won’t be any more food. Sorry,

as soon as we're unloaded we have to get back to the farm to perform an urgent project. Want us to leave some here to help you count?"

"Sure, no problem."

"We'll be in daily for our share of the proceeds."

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The urgent task that Uncle Pete referred to was getting the two tanks buried and plumbed to the generator. By this time, we had just about any plumbing pipe or fixture you could imagine and the hardest part was just digging the holes and installing an electric fuel pump to pump the diesel fuel to the genset. While we were doing that, others used the tanker connected to the genset and topped off some of our fuel tanks. They then made a trip down to Lebanon and refilled the tanker, parking it out of the way on the other farm.

Pete's friend was true to his word and soon propane delivery trucks showed up and refilled our propane tanks. The delivery trucks were refilled and left near the community center. Next came diesel tankers and Pete told them that before the tankers filled our tanks we needed to add the fuel supplements. I wasn't so sure about that, we usually did it before we filled the tankers, but it seemed to work out. Here, too, when all of the tanks were filled, they left us with 2 filled tankers which we stabilized.

We took the box trailer into town loaded with hogs and dropped them off at the locker plant. It wasn't one of our best ideas; we had to clean out the trailer pretty good after we delivered the pigs. We then went by the grocery store and picked up the jars, lids and a lot of coins from coin collections. The grocer gave us a copy of the list of goods he'd inventoried and it seemed to be pretty close to what we could remember loading into the box trailer. He'd never done us wrong and Pete was inclined to take his word that the inventory was accurate. However, Pete asked Juan about it and Juan said the guy was almost religious when he did the inventory.

That late Chief of Police was well thought of by most of the people in town. He'd been under a tremendous strain since the HEMP and later the war, maybe he just flipped. Either way, he wouldn't be a problem any longer. It wasn't until between Christmas and New Year that a Deputy came by to get our statement about the shooting. He had a tape recorder and interviewed all participants separately. That was between our looking around to salvage trailers and our trip to Conroe/Brenham and stops on the way home.

The HEMP and the war hadn't killed everyone and on our various trips, we often ran into people. It would be hard to say if they were survivalists, preppers or reformed sheeple; but...they all belonged to the NRA now. I really hadn't realized how many assault weapons there were in our country. The most common firearms we encountered were shotguns, M16s and Beretta pistols. There was the occasional SKS, AK, Garand, M14/M1A. Say, did you know that John C. Garand was involved in developing the M14?

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The M14 rifle design is one of the finest and most durable of this century. John C. Garand had more than a little to do with the evolution of the M14 from his M1 Rifle, particularly his work on the M14's final development at Mathewson Tool; the M14 remains the culmination of the life's work of that immortal firearms designer. Along with the FN-FAL and the AK-47, the M14 is considered to be one of the finest military rifles ever issued. It certainly represents the end of an era, where *lock, stock and barrel* had literal meaning and the Rifleman prized accuracy over *firepower*. The M14 is truly a *rifle for life*, an heirloom to be passed down the generations.

The M14 rifle is unique among US military rifles in that it has never officially been made available to the public by either the US Government or a Government contractor. Originally, the balance of the components of the M14 rifle, save its heart, the receiver, had been available for purchase. In recent years this supply has been supplemented by commercial reproductions of many components. The receivers in particular have been made available from a variety of commercial sources, with varying degrees of dimensional accuracy and production quality.

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We started going into town in small groups and picking up things we needed like underwear, socks, jeans, shirts, some outer wear and boots. All of our 'purchases' were duly recoded and offset against the amount owed for the supplies. The guns and ammo had been assembled and after we checked it over, Pete and Jonas told the town to keep what they had, with one exception, an M21 and a box of 25 new CMI USGI magazines. I found out about it on my next birthday when they gleefully presented me with the rifle and 2 cases of M118LR. The rifle was complete with a Leupold Mk 4 variable power scope with Mil Dot reticule.

"You look happy."

"I am Marie; this is nearly identical to the rifle I used in Iraq."

"The only difference between men and boys is the price of their toys. What do you suppose that setup is worth?"

"Well, it's fully equipped with an Mk 4 3.5-10x40mm LR/T M3 Long Range Tactical Front Focal Rifle Scope and a Harris bipod. The rifle ran about \$2,800, the scope about \$1,600 and the magazines about \$25 each. What's that, about five grand?"

"Your Uncle Pete must think very highly of you. You plan to pass on your Loaded to me?"

“If you want it, I’d love to do that. It would simplify things if we both used rifles with compatible magazines and ammunition. You want a .45 too?”

“Thanks, but I’ll pass. The Beretta is enough gun for me and I’m used to it. Besides, with the Gold Dot, it puts them down.”

Our conversation brought to mind a conversation we’d had many years back.

*“That should be enough, most likely you never have to draw it, let alone shoot it. Those 124gr +P Gold Dot rounds should stop anyone not wearing body armor dead in their tracks.”*

*“What do I do if they have body armor?”*

*“What else; put one right between their baby blues.”*

*“Failure to stop drill?”*

*“Not if you already know they have a vest, no. If you can’t tell, start with body shots and add the third shot unless they’re already going down.”*

It had proven to be a lesson well learned. It provoked the thought, “Never P.O. Mama if she’s wearing her Beretta.”

The M21 brought to mind another thought, about the price of the M14/M1A in general. They were probably the finest Main Battle Rifle ever fielded by the US Military. Even though they’d been quickly superseded by the M-16, they remain in use in all theatres of battle well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They were dependable and very, very accurate. But, they were expensive regardless of the source: Springfield Armory, Fulton Armory or Smith Enterprises. Other rifles in the same caliber were available; DSA had FAL rifles and PTR 91, Inc. made clones of the H&K HK-91. Most of the rifles had threaded barrels and could be fitted with improved flashhiders aka suppressors. I recall a show I saw on TV a few years back on the Military Channel about Top Snipers. All of them preferred suppressors for their flash hiding ability. The Smith Enterprises suppressor installed via the Vortex flashhider and Smith claimed it was easily to rebuild. The OPS, Inc. suppressor threaded onto the OPS, Inc. muzzle brake or directly onto the barrel, depending on model.

John Maniatty (Frugal Squirrel) sold another kind of flash suppressor that got rave reviews but I don’t recall what it was. The upside on the issue of suppressors was that we had an assortment available including Surefire, Advanced Armaments, Reflex (imported) and others that don’t come to mind at the moment; both in 5.56 and 7.62. Pete wasn’t kidding when he said, “Don’t try to take us out, you’ll lose.”

The improved flashhiders, while available for over the counter purchase in many European countries, were subject the NFA in the US. I suspected that there more unregis-



tered suppressors floating around than registered suppressors. It wouldn't matter in the end either way. Do you remember what the Governor of Texas said about seceding from the US? The country could probably divide into half a dozen regional groups of states, or perhaps you'd see something like William Johnston's Tri-State Collation or SUSA (Southern United States of America).

Ben Raines' favorite guns were the M-14 *Thunder Lizard* and the venerable *Chicago Typewriter* Thompson SMG. He favored the .45 Colt 1911A1. It was only later that he switched to the M4 carbine; he had to wait until it was invented.

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The most significant external difference between the loaded and the M21 externally was the stock. The M-21 had a walnut stock with adjustable cheek piece. I first concentrated on verifying the rifle's sighting followed by adjusting the cheek piece to properly fit me. The National Match Flashhider was replaced with a muzzle brake and real flashhider, a Surefire. When the M21 was first introduced, it had a Leatherwood 3–9x Adjustable Ranging Telescope (ART) telescopic sight. While I guess I'd always been a gun nut, receiving the M21 brought back memories of Iraq. A quote may explain how I felt about Iraq: *it was the best of times and the worst of times* (Opening line of *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens).

Most of the time we were too busy to just sit and think about things. Most of the time. With a full stock of fuel, refilled freezers, trading reestablished with Camdenton and the weather mostly still miserable, a time came to just sit and think. I went to my diary and began rewriting it as a narrative rather than a set of somewhat disjointed daily notes. Since Marie and I can't have children, I'm not sure who I'll pass it on to, unless we adopt. That subject hadn't come up since the HEMP.

While we still lived in the hunting shack, it had basically become our bedroom home as we spent very little time at the shack. If we weren't doing chores, you'd likely find us at the community center along with everyone else with free time on their hands. This year instead of marking standing dead trees, we cut them down on the spot and hauled the logs back to the farmstead to be cut up and split.

The 160 acres of trees had been thoroughly cleaned up and we came up short on firewood. We turned to the Big Piney section of the Mark Twain National Forest, which incorporates Fort Leonard Wood, and used the lowboys to haul logs back. That raised a new issue and we ended up sending a tractor back down to Brenham to recover the lowboy we dropped.

It was very obvious when the people in Camdenton had been getting their firewood because they were clear cutting beginning right at the edge of the forest, a little west of where Missouri 7 crosses I-40. We'd brought the crane from the Camdenton city yard to load the logs onto the lowboys. We started with the deadfalls that remained and then turned to the standing dead trees. Once we had 3 semi rigs we were hauling about 12

loads of logs per day. These were dropped off in the area behind the community building and those not harvesting wood cut and split the logs into firewood.

## The Hunting Shack – Chapter 31

Keep in mind that the population had grown significantly since Marie and I moved here. The one thing we weren't short on was labor. We harvested timber for 5 weeks, only taking Sunday's off. We had ~350 loads of logs with over half of them cut and split. Jonas and Pete returned the crane and picked up two transfer dump trucks and headed for Montrose Power Station. In all, they made three trips and brought back a total of 60 yards of coal.

A transfer dump truck is a dump truck that pulls a trailer with sometime an equal and sometimes lower capacity. These dumps held 5 yards each as did the trailers. Thus, each trip brought back 20 yards of coal. When they dropped off the dump trucks, they brought back a front end loader which was used to restack the coal.

From that point on, most of the men were cutting and splitting firewood when not occupied with chores and the ladies were engaged in harvesting and canning the produce from the garden and two greenhouses. The folks in Camdenton finally got the hint and began planting their own gardens; sometimes in the backyard and sometimes in both yards. We traded them some heirlooms seeds to partially offset the cost of our clothing acquisitions.

"We need to make another trip."

"Where to this time?"

"We're going to take that 53' box trailer and go back to the Wal-Marts. We weren't thinking; we could have loaded up on clothing."

"But Pete, we were thinking. We got a truckload of food and except for the small amount we kept, it went to help the folks in Camdenton. From my perspective, it eliminated one source of trouble, at least for now."

"The selection of clothing in Camdenton was pretty slim Don. If we get clothing, we'll just have more trade goods. Maybe we should take a second trailer and possibly a third and send those two to Sam's Clubs."

"We only have two more box trailers at the moment, both 40'."

"Right, that's 80' of food. Actually it's about 2,400ft<sup>3</sup> of food per trailer (they were the 12'6" high trailers). We'll just take the Hummer's with the M2HBs. Who knows, they might need the Mk-19 here."

"Did it ever occur to you that most of the work around the farms is done by a select few people?"

“Yeah, everyone except my three kids and their spouses. I’m not as dumb as you may think. Don’t worry about it Don, they’ll get theirs; or should I say they won’t get what they expect?”

“The will?”

“Yes and it’s recorded with the County Clerk.”

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Off we went for what I hoped was the final time this year. The first place we hit was a Super Wal-Mart, before we split up. We spent two days there loading every bit of clothing and shoes. We filled one trailer with food and had a fair amount in the second. Pete pulled out a list of Wal-Mart stores and we headed to another Super Wal-Mart, this one in Arkansas. We filled the second food truck and found a second 53’ trailer. We finally got the tractor running and backed it up to the loading dock. We didn’t clean the place out, but we had all of the clothing, shoes and food. We also cleaned out the pharmacy. There was just enough available space to return to the first store and clean out their pharmacy.

With two loaded 53’ trailers and 2 loaded 40’ trailers, we headed home. We were getting close when we ran into a roadblock. As it happened it was a narrow spot in the road and we weren’t able to turn around and make a hasty exit. Jonas ordered a second Hummer forward and the Hummer’s proceeded towards the roadblock at a slow pace, stopping about 500 yards back.

“Get their attention,” Jonas radioed.

Chugga, chugga, chugga; both M2Bs opened up, shredding the vehicles forming the roadblock. Just in front of one of the Hummers, there was an explosion, probably a 40mm grenade or a LAW rocket, I couldn’t tell. The Hummers backed up to almost 900 yards and continued to pour fire on the roadblock. Eventually the roadblock became a burning pile of scrap metal. We hadn’t seen a soul and the only person we knew for sure was there was the grenadier.

It took the fire about 30 minutes to burn down to a point where we could risk trying to drive through the mess. We fired up the original 53’ tractor trailer rig and it took off, building speed. It was probably only going about 30mph when it hit the barricade, but with the full load, it had enough momentum to plow a hole cleanly through it. As it passed, a second grenade or rocket chased it, again missing.

We staggered the remaining vehicles, Hummer, truck, Hummer, truck, Hummer truck. The Hummers opened up their machine guns on the right side of the road in the general area where they thought the grenade or rocket had come from. We sailed through the roadblock shifting gears as we went. We got up to a semi-sedate 55mph and continued home where we parked the trailers behind the community center.

“Bullet holes? What happened?”

“What bullet holes?”

“Right there in the tractor pulling the 53’ trailer, you took.”

Sure enough, there were a few bullet holes in the front of the tractor. We’d check it later, but they must not have hit anything vital, we made it home. There were more questions about what happened than we had answers. I’m sure we all told the same story from our perspective. Roadblock-shooting-rocket/grenade-driving through-second rocket/grenade-continuing the trip. It wasn’t as nearly exciting as when the Chief attacked.

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Pete decided that we should grade and gravel more space behind the community building because it was a bigger parking lot than there was in front of the building. We borrowed a grader and the transfer dump trucks from the city yard and got gravel at the quarry – crushed limestone. We also got a roller and packed it down to create a fairly even surface. We were ready when the snow came.

The snow came much later this year and in much smaller quantities. Whatever had caused the bad winters had apparently settled down. It wasn’t nearly as cold and we were able to sort through the loot and organize it before putting it back in the trailers. We did that with each of the 4 trailers and set up the 2<sup>nd</sup> 53’ trailer with food for Camdenton and kept the rest.

With the winter proving to be very mild, we took advantage and went back to the city yard, got the crane and returned to the Big Piney to harvest more firewood. We hauled another 12 loads a day for about ten weeks. We were cutting faster than they were cutting and spitting and everyone took Sundays off. Still, by the time we’d quit, we’d hauled 720 loads of logs and would never have to cut firewood again. It still took ten weeks to finish cutting, splitting and stacking, but the pile was so big we had no idea how much wood was in it.

The piles of firewood started with 4 T posts driven in the ground and were about 96’ long by 6’ high. The wood was cut to 12” long and those 4 rows made up a cord every 8’, making it 18 cords per set of 4 posts. We tried counting it but each of us came up with a different total. There had to be a lot in a pile 6’ high by 96’ long by somewhere on the order of 200 T posts. I figured at least 900 cords on top of what we cut earlier. I just calculated our earlier effort, if 720 loads equaled 900 cords, then 350 loads equaled something on the order of 440 cords, giving us a total of 1,340.

“How much do we have?”

“I figure around 1,340 cords.”

“That can’t be right, figure it again. I figure we had about 2½ cords per load, which would mean we should have closer to 2,700 cords. I don’t know how you came up short, but you’re surely short.”

Well, I got a tape measure and measured rather than guessing. The piles started at 6’ but stair stepped up to 8’ making each set of four posts 24 rather than 18 cords. I also measured the length of the spit wood and the pieces were 16” except for the first four rows which was cut shorter for the kitchen stoves. Therefore, the remaining 198, not 196, rows had 24 cords for every 3 rows.  $66 \times 24 = 1,584$  cords plus the 24 cords of stove wood for a total of 1,608 cords. I was still missing 1,100 cords.

“I’m up to 1,608, but don’t know where the other wood is.”

“Did you ask around if anyone took any wood home? Did you check to see if we sold some to Camdenton?”

“Uh, duh, uh...”

“I take it that means you didn’t. Check with each family and see how much they took. Most of the places have full woods piles. And, I figure that those folks in Camdenton probably came begging for dry wood once they figured out we knew what they were doing.”

(Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me.) Anyway, ten cords had been distributed to each family accounting for an additional 140 cords; total 1,748. Asking around, I learned that about 800 cords had been sold to Camdenton, bringing the total to 2,548. Ten cords had been moved to the lowest level of the barn to provide heat for the still and biodiesel producer, 2,558.

“Are you set on 2,700 cords?”

“Why?”

“I’ve only come up with 2,558 cords.”

“Hell yeah, I was guessing and you’re within 5% of my guess. Did we sell some?”

“They sold around 800 cords to Camdenton. Plus each trailer, the shack and your house has 10 cords. There are 10 cords in the lower level of the underground barn. At first I thought we’d never have to cut wood again; now, I think we’ve only managed to put it off for a few years.”

“We can cut to replace what we use and sell and unless the weather turns bad again, it will be less than 1,000 cords per year and maybe no more than 5-600. Did you compute average yield per load?”

“No, but it is 2,558 divided by 1,070; about 2.4 cord per load.”

“It’s all hardwood, right?”

“All White Oak; including white, bur, swamp or chinquapin.”

Experience is an excellent teacher, especially if you do it wrong the first time. The next time I counted up the wood, I wouldn’t be making any assumptions.

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“Standby for an urgent message. We have company and it looks like the military.”

“How do you know?”

“They’re wearing uniforms, driving in a convoy and are only going about 35mph.”

Jonas went to his trailer and changed in his ACUs and full battle rattle. He was waiting at parade rest when they pulled in the driveway to the main farm. He was out of uniform because he had his M21 and Kimber Tactical II in an M16 holster hanging off a pistol belt with a pair of double magazine pouches, butt pack and 2 canteens. He didn’t mount his bayonet or remove the suppressor.

Jonas snapped to attention and gave a rifle salute. The young looking Lieutenant asked who was in charge. Jonas said Pete and he were and they’d be happy to speak to his company commander. The LT’s eyes fired but he went to the third Hummer and a Captain got out, Jonas gave him a rifle salute and stood at attention.

“At ease Sergeant Major. What’s the skinny?”

“It’s a long story Captain. We can provide coffee for your men at the community center and Pete, you and I can discuss it at length in the house.”

“Lieutenant, you and the men have been offered coffee. Where is the community center?”

## The Hunting Shack – Chapter 32

“Don...”

“Follow me fellas, it’s only a couple of hundred yards down that lane.”

“Come back after you’ve shown them where to go.”

“Sure thing Pete.”

“The way you’re dressed Sergeant Major, I presume you’re on active duty?”

“No sir, I’m retired. We went down to Texas for the little spat with the Chinese and someone forgot to recode my ID card so it still shows active duty. I figured you might appreciate a little military courtesy. By the way, it’s Command Sergeant Major, sir.”

“What’s the story?”

“My wife and I bugged out for here around the time of the HEMP. We’ve been here since. Pete is mostly responsible for feeding Camdenton. We haven’t been able to grow crops for the last 2 years due to the weather so we’ve salvaged food and such for the folks in town. We’ve had a little trouble, but nothing we couldn’t handle. With the Fort so close, we collected some ordnance and ammo to keep going.”

“We can produce 600 gallons a day of biodiesel when we can plant and harvest canola. We could probably field a company of mounted cavalry if needed. We have 4 Hummers, 3 with M2HBs and one with an Mk-19. We also have M240s. Those came from the Fort. I’d rather keep them until law and order is well established before we turn them in.”

I started to say something about the M2A1s, but didn’t. What the Captain didn’t know couldn’t hurt us. I noted that the LAWs, M136 AT4s, M18A1 Claymores, the M183 demolition kits and the grenades weren’t mentioned. Neither was the subject of the M107s and Mk15 brought up. The 107s and Mk15 were our guns, we’d rescued them. The various military vehicles were parked behind the community center in plain sight and would be returned eventually.

“I noticed a lot of M14s.”

“They’re most M1As, Captain, and personal property. However we have at least 5 Designated Marksmen in our group. Don, here was Army and we have 4 Marines who came up from San Antonio.”

“And what did you do Command Sergeant Major?”

“Detachment D until I retired. Before that, Special Forces and before that...well it’s not important.”



“Who is the law around here?”

“The County Sheriff in Camdenton. We killed the local Police Chief. He attacked the farm on a Thanksgiving but his pickup couldn’t stand up against the Mk-19.”

“I’d like to know more about that.”

“The Sheriff has all of our recorded statements and no charges were brought.”

“I don’t believe we’ll leave a squad here in Camdenton, you seem to have things well in hand. Could I see this community center you talked about?”

“Might as well. It’s lunch time and I think they’re serving sliders and fries today.”

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We parked in back. The Captain saw the HEMTT and trailer and said they were short of trucks. We agreed to let him take it as long as we could turn in the Hummers later. He was impressed with our community center and noted the facts that we had PV panels for power. Pete explained that we also had a 90kw genset for backup. He said they were headed to town and Jonas suggested that it might be a good time to deliver the 53’ trailer of food to the Hy-Vee store.

When we dropped it off, there was a fair amount of goods for us and a little gold and silver. We admonished the man to take a good inventory and asked him to pack the goods in the trailer after he’d emptied it. About a dozen young men showed up shortly after we pulled in and began the process of unloading. The Captain took the man aside and questioned him about something; probably our arrangement. He seemed satisfied with the answers he got.

We got ready to go and noticed the Captain headed to the Sheriff’s office. Let him ask, it was all on tape. He only had a Platoon of soldiers; we nearly had him outnumbered; if not outnumbered, outclassed for sure. There were advantages to having a huge supply of ammo and mandatory weekly practice. Not that we wanted to fight with the good guys, just that if push came to shove... we could shove back. We’d take firewood orders when we returned to pick up the trailer.

“You know that some of that flour we sent in is pretty old?”

“So?”

“It might be buggy.”

That’s why you sift it, to get the bugs out. You’re overlooking the fact that as cold as it has been the past few winters, the flour was probably frozen and killed off the bugs.”

That evening sitting around in the community center a conversation developed.

“Can anyone tell me how we came to this?” ask one of the teens.

*“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.* Most of the young people these days had forgotten about things like the Cuban Missiles Crisis. In the past,” Jonas continued, “we had lessons on how serious the world situation really was. Throughout the Cold War, people were on edge to one degree or another. However, when the Wall came down and the Soviet Union broke up, people wanted to believe that the danger was over. Never mind that the nuclear club had grown to 10 nations from 5. Israel had nukes but refused to discuss the issue. India and Pakistan had nukes followed by North Korea and Iran.

“There are people who don’t really give much thought to what causes wars. Regardless of why we get involved in a war, all they want to do is protest. We label them liberals and accept that they’re just part of the mix of people that make up this country. When they forced us out of Vietnam, a pattern developed. Every conflict since then has had its share of war protestors. A notable example in modern times might be Cindy Sheehan. She became a war protestor after her son Casey died in The War on Terror. Never mind he was a volunteer, she started a campaign to end the war.

“The world is filled with differing ideologies touching on all subjects like religion, economic systems, and forms of government and, well you get the idea. Wars are about people, not issues. People don’t need an excuse to go to war, but they make one up if there’s no pressing issue. If we hadn’t tried to kill ourselves off, Mother Nature might have tried; be it global warming or a new ice age. The potential natural disasters are too numerous to list. We learn to improvise, adapt and overcome. In time, the country will restore itself, although not to its previous level of technology for some time to come.”

The conversation petered off after Jonas’s lecture. It gave each of us plenty to think about. Pete had said that there weren’t many war protestors during WW II when he was growing up. He suggested that it was because of Pearl Harbor and the US, down deep inside, wanted revenge. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Adolph Hitler, in a foolish move, declared war on the US. We were fighting two wars at once; the war in the Pacific and the war in Europe that started in Africa and moved to Sicily and Italy. A year after the Normandy invasion, Hitler was dead and the atom bomb was nearing completion. We dropped 2 atom bombs and Japan had surrendered.

That was not the end, but the beginning. North Korea invaded South Korea five years later. That war never ended. Ten years later, Kennedy was supplying advisors to South Vietnam. We didn’t win that one and didn’t fight again until the operations in Grenada and Panama, where we succeeded. Then Saddam seized Kuwait and good ol’ Norm kicked butt.

The same year, the wall came down and the USSR became the CIS. About 10 years after that, 19 men hijacked 4 airplanes and flew 2 into the WTC and 1 into the Pentagon. The passengers of the fourth attacked the hijackers and the plane crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. That led to our attacking Afghanistan and for some reason, Iraq. We were out of Iraq before we left Afghanistan; Iraqi Freedom lasted about 10 years. No one has defeated Afghanistan for a long time, the USSR couldn't.

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We also discussed if there would be an end to this, the PAW. Camdenton was now doing fine, but they didn't have much industry and restarting industry was what it would take to bring the nation back from the edge. We eventually learned that a volcano in the western Pacific had erupted explosively, accounting for the bad winters. We suspected as much because the snow contained grit. However, it wasn't until we hooked up with an English speaking man from Micronesia that we confirmed what we suspected.

Pete's three children and their children finally left the area after a serious argument with Pete over his will. Truthfully, most of us didn't mind seeing them go. Hell, we even helped them, towing the singlewide mobile homes over to the Rolla area. They were only 70 miles away, at the NE corner of Big Piney, but it surely helped. Pete did a few more things for them like locating a large propane fueled generator, a huge 10,000-gallon propane tank and filling it. To be sure they wouldn't come back, we found and installed a motel sized septic system and found a well driller who put in a well with a solar powered water pump and a 2,700-gallon water tank.

In addition, we looked in Rolla and found them a rototiller, assorted hand garden tools and gave them six cans of heirloom seeds. They were on their own as far as fuel for their vehicles went, after they used up the 1,000-gallon tank of biodiesel we left them. They kept the firearms Pete had given them and enough ammo for several years. Add to that one year of LTS food and a portion of our canned food, a canner, jars and lids and canning spices.

Pete took them aside when we were finished making sure that whatever he said was private. Jonas and I strained to hear what he said, to no avail. He seemed to be, well...disappointed but refused to discuss what was said. On the way back, Pete told us he hadn't been feeling well and had discussed it with Sarah. He was deeding his farm to Marie and me, effective immediately. Sarah and he would continue to live in the big house and we were expected to care for them if either became sick or one of them died.

About a month later, Pete had a heart attack. We got him into Camdenton after we performed CPR, got his heart restarted and put him on a bottle of oxygen. Fortunately, the National Guard had left a supply of medicine. Pete was given some kind of heart medicine, high blood pressure medicine, a cholesterol medicine and nitro. He couldn't do much.

To follow the doctor's orders, Pete took a M1A, LBE and walked the property once a day. Although he couldn't work, the doctor told him he had to walk. He started off slowly and within a few weeks was walking about 2 miles, to the end of the property and back. He had to stop when we got our first skiff of snow.

Since he didn't own the property across the road, he had a discussion with the men from San Antonio. They lived there and farmed it and he told them that possession was 9 points of the law. He would back their claim to ownership of the property.

To have enough canola oil to convert to biodiesel, we really needed another section of land. Joe checked and the section behind them wasn't being farmed. They checked the house and found two bodies in the living room. The bodies were pretty well mummified and didn't stink. They buried them and checked the place out. There was a good supply of farm equipment that only needed new batteries for the tractors. There was no live-stock in evidence, they'd either died, run off or had been rustled. They staked a claim on the property right then and there.

There were 630 tillable acres and it was all planted in canola. That should produce an estimated 80,000 additional gallons of biodiesel. We were getting near to the capacity of the machine, 219,000 gallons. I believe I said earlier, 'almost 220,000 gallons'. Actually if we ran 3 shifts per day and had the oil and chemicals, we could produce 365.25 times 1,800 gallons or a total of 657,450 gallons per year. That would require a lot more land and more corn for ethanol. Almost 5,200 acres of nothing but canola. One ethanol plant owned by farmers in Minnesota processes 11,751 bushels of grain a day to produce 33,990 gallons of ethanol and 95 tons of high-protein livestock feed.

Now, I ask you to think about that; we're growing 80 acres of corn or about 12,000 bushels in a good year. We could make all the ethanol we needed and the livestock would eat the canola meal instead of corn. A very bad yield would be at least 8,000 bushels, enough for 23,000 gallons of ethanol with a little for the barrel, too. Pete said 27.4L of ethanol per 100 liters of oil. Well, that means 27.4 gallons of ethanol per 100 gallons of oil. But, 219,000 gallons of oil would require 60,000 gallons of ethanol. I didn't realize that we were producing that much ethanol. No wonder Pete had us out looking for more corn, he was making booze.

We'd produced ~94,000 gallons of biodiesel which means we also produced ~25,800 gallons of ethanol. That's better; we weren't actually converting all of the corn into ethanol. Most of it, but not all. This was yet another lesson learned, the number of acres of corn we needed to plant to be sure we produced enough ethanol to convert the canola oil to biodiesel. I asked Marie to do the math.

"Ok, you get 2.9 gallons of ethanol per bushel of corn. Your average corn yield has been about 150 bushels per acre. Therefore, an acre of corn produces 435 gallons of ethanol. That's enough ethanol to process 1,587 gallons of canola oil. Divided by 127 gallons per acre shows you need 1 acre of corn per 12.5 acres of canola."

“That’s all there is to it?”

“Simple math, you could have figured it out.”

“Maybe, but thanks.”

We planted according to Marie’s math.

## The Hunting Shack – Epilogue

One day the following summer, Pete was out for his usual walk. Sarah came to me and asked, “Have you seen Pete?”

“Not for a while, doesn’t he usually take his walk around this time?”

“That’s just it; he’s been gone an awfully long time.”

“I go check on him.”

“Thanks Don.”

I decided to take my Chevy. I found him outbound about ½ mile from the house, down on the ground. I checked and he didn’t have a pulse. I radioed to Jonas and started CPR. I immediately knew that it wouldn’t do any good, he was already cooling off.

“Dead?” Jonas asked when he arrived.

“Long dead. He’s already cooling off. Give me a hand and we’ll put him in the back of my truck.”

“I’ve got a blanket to cover him with.”

We put Pete and then his firearms in the back of my Chevy. Jonas covered him with a blanket. He said he’d go get Molly and tell Sarah. I arrived back at the farmstead where Jonas, Molly and Marie were trying to comfort Sarah. Considering his previous heart attack, I expected stoicism (admirable patience and endurance shown in the face of adversity); she was anything but stoic. Jonas and I took Pete to the funeral home in Camdenton where Pete had prepaid their funerals with a one year supply of food for five people. Burial was to be on the farm.

Two days later, we had a church service and took Pete back to the farm for burial. Sarah was beside herself. When she reached to toss a handful of earth into the grave, she collapsed. She was breathing and her heart was still beating, but she was unconscious. We loaded her in a Hummer and raced to the hospital in Osage Beach. They quickly determined that she’d had a stroke.

A stroke is a medical emergency and can cause permanent neurological damage, complications and death. It is the leading cause of adult disability in the United States and Europe. In the UK, it is the second most common cause of death, the first being heart attacks and third being cancer. It is the number two cause of death worldwide and may soon become the leading cause of death worldwide. That information was dated, it was pre-war. Sarah never regained consciousness. She passed 3 days later. The hospital called the funeral home via amateur radio via the County Sheriff. He drove out and noti-

fied us. We held her funeral two days later at the church and buried her on the farm next to Pete.

A few days later, we made the trip to Rolla.

“Why didn’t you come get us before the funerals?”

“Sarah told us not to come get you when your father died. She also indicated that she hoped you didn’t show up when she died. Little did we know she’d be dead a few days later.”

“We’ll move back to take over the farm.”

“Uh, Pete signed it over to Marie and me before his first heart attack. That was not long after the three of you moved to Rolla.”

“What about their wills?”

“There was nothing to leave, Pete and Sarah gave us everything before they died in exchange for a promise to care for them until they died. We did that at his lawyer’s office.”

I half expected them to fight, or sue. They did neither and we never heard from them again. Everyone living at the farm and across the road stayed where they were, farming, growing canola, corn, oats, wheat and alfalfa. We had to increase the size of the pasture as the herds grew.

Marie and I adopted an abandoned baby. We later learned that the Camdenton police had identified the mother, Jeanie. She had abandoned the baby at the hospital in Osage Beach on her way out of town. We never saw her again either. We named the baby Rachael Lauren West. That was the same name another Marie gave her first daughter, Rachael Lauren.

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The country slowly picked itself up again, with challenges. The Captain returned to tell us about the new acting president. Obama had died from the influenza. There was no living person in the line of succession who was born in America. Eventually, the Joint Chiefs – since there was no congress – appointed Colin Powell as acting President. His wife let him take the job, but he was in his 80s and said he’d only serve until elections were held within 2 years.

Our friends from Texas formed a corporation and put both their farms in the name of the corporation. We still made the occasional long distance trip getting things we needed that were unavailable locally. Jonas and Molly slowly changed to grey hair and only helped with the garden and cooking. Basically, Molly took Sarah’s place freeing Marie to care for Lauren and do garden work. We merged our garden with the garden on the

other farm and continued to grow food in the greenhouses year round. Those teens grew up and married and we ended up moving more homes to the farms. Since there were 3 of the large generators, we put a total of 12 trailers on the other farm and used both gensets to provide power for the house, trailers and farm.

Marie and I moved to the big house and let one of the teen couples occupy the hunting shack when they grew and got married. We had no shortage of labor with them all choosing to live here. We eventually ran across a 1mw wind turbine and had it professionally installed. That solved our power problem for good. And the generators were rebuilt and the tanks refilled for the next time we needed them.

We eventually were the major biodiesel supplier in the area, raising 160 acres of corn, 40 acres of alfalfa, 40 acres of oats and 80 acres of wheat. The remainder of the farm was the timber and pasture. Our cattle herd and horse herds both grew to about 100 head. We kept a lid on the hogs at 60 sows and 3 boars. We also kept the flock of chickens around 400 and our milk and egg sales were a major source of income, exceeded only by our sales of biodiesel. We kept the brood hens and roosters separate from our egg laying flock, doing a nip here and a tuck there to keep the operation from becoming too large.

Eighteen months after the Captain visited, new national, state and county elections were held. My name was brought up but I'd have no part of it, I didn't have time. Even with all of our available help, we frequently put in long days. A couple years after that, KCPL brought Montrose Station back online and we were forced to buy our own coal. It was hard to find if you didn't already have a source and I went to Montrose and talked to their Chief of Security, a guy name Williams and the plant manager. He agreed to let us have a car of coal each year for the same price he paid.

We still harvested timber, most from Big Piney, but only replaced what we used. The folks in Camdenton finally figured out how to harvest their own firewood. We dismantled the guns from the Hummers and repainted them in a Realtree camouflage pattern. Marie bought some cloth in a hardwood pattern and we copied it onto the Hummers the best we could. It did cover over all of the government numbers painted everywhere.

There was one thing we continued to do, as much for fun as for necessity. We went to the range every Sunday afternoon, weather permitting. With the wars all over the Lake City ammo plant continued to produce ammo with a fair portion of it available on the market at very good prices. There was an overall change in attitudes about firearms and most states and the federal government repealed most of the firearms laws on the books. About the only remaining law was the background check and 3 day waiting period. The NFA was modified, not eliminated, and the tax was reduced from \$200 to \$20 and they had to approve or reject your purchase in 30 days.

A lot of the laws to legislate morality fell by the way side. Cigarette and alcohol taxes dropped back to pre-1980 levels. Laws requiring serial number on ammo were repealed



and California, if you can believe it, eliminated about 90% of their 'dumb' gun laws. I guess that those liberals who favored restrictive guns law died in the war, or something.

I've to run, it's Lauren's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday and if I'm late, I never hear the end of it.

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